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THE

SPIRITUAL COMBAT:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE PEACE OF THE SOUL,

AND

THE HAPPINESS OF THE HEART,

WHICH

DIES TO ITSELF,

IN ORDER TO

LIVE TO GOD.

The life of man upon earth is a warfare.
Job vii. 1.

PHILADELPHIA :

**PRINTED FOR BERNARD DORNIN,
AT THE CATHOLIC BOOKSTORE, CORNER OF THIRD
AND WALNUT STREETS.**

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1817.

LYDIA R. BAILEY, PRINTER.

Bx
2349
53722
1817

PREFACE.

THE following treatise comprehends in a concise manner, the whole system of a Devout Life, gathered from the maxims of the Gospel, particularly by those who regard humility and self-denial.

Among an infinity of encomiums which might be cited in its commendation, let it suffice to say that one of the greatest Saints those later ages have produced, St. Francis of Sales, for upwards of twenty years carried this book in his pocket, and never failed reading some pages of it every day: he called it his Director, and recommended it to all those who consulted him in the great affair of salvation.—And, though that excellent book, the Imitation of Christ, like this, tends to unite the soul entirely to God; yet St. Francis gave the preference to the SPIRITUAL COMBAT, for this reason, because the latter reduces its maxims to practice; whereas the former contains indeed abundance

of choice sentiments, but does not point out the immediate application of them.

The SPIRITUAL COMBAT has this fate in common with several excellent treatises, to be attributed to various authors. What appears most probable in regard to this tract is, that the first sketch of it was from the pen of D. John de Castanisa, a Spanish Benedictine ; but that the finishing hand, with very great additions, was put to it by D. Laurence Scupoli, a Theatine of Italy.

As the author has laid down a plan, which if duly followed will lead to the most consummate sanctity ; persons who live in the world, may imagine such spirituality too refined for their practice ; but this may be depended on, that no one can read this little tract, without reaping great advantage from it in whatever state of life he is placed. And if in the pursuit of human arts and sciences, we are fond of learning under the greatest masters, though we have very little hopes of attaining their perfection, certainly the same rule ought to direct our choice with regard to the science of the Saints, which at least, in some degree, is absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls.

THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

None shall be crowned who hath not fought well.
2 Tim. ii.

CHAPTER I.

*In what Christian perfection consists :
We must fight in order to attain it :
Four things necessary for obtaining
the victory.*

IF you seek, O Christian Soul, to attain to the highest pitch of Evangelical perfection, and unite yourself so closely with God as to become one Spirit with him ; it is requisite in order to succeed in a design the most sublime that can be expressed or imagined, that you be first acquainted with the true nature and perfection of Spirituality.

Some, who only judge by appearances, make it consist in penitential works, in hair shirts, chastisements, watching,

fasting, and such like corporal mortifications.

Many, especially women, fancy themselves consummately virtuous, when habituated to long vocal prayers, hearing several masses, assisting at the whole divine office, spending many hours in the church, and frequent communion.

Others, not excepting some of those who have consecrated themselves to God in a religious life, think that perfection consists in being assiduous in the choir, in affecting silence and retirement, and a strict observance of their rule. Thus different people place perfection in different practices; but certain it is they all equally deceive themselves. For, as exterior works are no more than either dispositions for becoming truly pious, or the effects of real piety, it cannot be said that Christian perfection, and true piety, consist in them.

Doubtless they are powerful means for becoming truly perfect, and truly pious, and when employed with discretion, are of singular efficacy for supporting our nature, ever averse to good, and prone to evil; for repelling the at-

tacks, and escaping the snares of our common enemy ; for obtaining from the Father of Mercies, those succours so necessary for the righteous, especially beginners.

They are besides, in persons truly pious, excellent fruits of consummate virtue. For such chastise their bodies either in punishment of past offences, or for greater humiliation and subjection to their Creator. They seek solitude and observe silence ; that retired from the World, they may preserve themselves clear from the least stain of sin, and converse only with Heaven and its Angels. Their time is spent in works of piety and the service of God ; they pray, and meditate on the life and passion of our Redeemer, not through curiosity, or for the sake of some sensible pleasure arising from thence, but through a desire of knowing better on one side the immensity of the Divine Goodness, and on the other, the excess of their own ingratitude, in order to augment their love of God, and the detestation of themselves, to follow their Lord in taking up his Cross, and renouncing their own will ; frequenting the sacraments with no other view than

the honour of God, and their own stricter union with him, and greater security from the power of the Devil.

But the case is far different with those who ignorantly place their devotion in exterior works, which frequently are the cause of their perdition, and of worse consequence than manifest crimes; not that they are in themselves pernicious, but only from a wrong application.—Their attachment to such works is so great, that they utterly neglect to watch the secret motions of their hearts, but giving them full scope, leave them exposed to their own corruption and the wiles of the Devil. Then it is that this seducer seeing them go astray, not only encourages them to pursue their way, but fills their imagination with empty ideas, they already taste the joys of Paradise, the delights of Angels; they see God face to face! The Deceiver does not hesitate even to suggest in their mental prayer, sublime, surprising, and ravishing thoughts, that, forgetting the world and all earthly things, they are rapt to the third Heaven.

But a very little reflection on their conduct discovers their error, and the

great distance between them and that perfection of which we are now in search. For in every thing they are fond of preference before others: they know no guide but their own private judgment, no rule but their own will; and blind in their own affairs, ever quick sighted in those of their neighbours, ever ready to find fault. Touch but the empty reputation of sanctity they fancy themselves possessed of, and of which they are excessively jealous; order them but to discontinue any of the devotions to which they are habituated; their trouble and vexation is scarce to be expressed.

If God himself, in order to open their eyes and shew them the true path to perfection, should send them crosses, sickness, or severe persecutions, the surest trials of his servants fidelity, and which never happen but by his appointment and permission; then it is that the corruption of their hearts discovers itself through their excessive pride.

In all the incidents of this life, whether happy or otherwise, they are utter strangers to a due conformity to the will of God; they know not how to bend under his Almighty power, to sub-

mit to his judgments, no less equitable than secret and impenetrable; and, in imitation of CHRIST crucified, to humble themselves before all men; to love their enemies as the instruments employed by the divine goodness to train them to mortification, and co-operate, not only in their salvation hereafter, but also in their greater sanctification in this life. It is to this that their imminent danger of being lost is owing. For contemplating with eyes dazzled by self-love, themselves and their actions, not otherwise blamable, they are puffed up with vanity, they conclude themselves far advanced towards God, and readily condemn their neighbour: nay, their pride often times will so far increase their blindness, that their conversion cannot be effected without a miracle of grace.

Experience convinces us, that professed sinners are with less difficulty reclaimed, than those who wilfully make their own hearts a secret to themselves through a false resemblance of virtue. From whence you will easily comprehend, that spiritual life does not consist in the several practices before enumerated, if considered only in the out-

ward appearance : It properly consists in knowing the infinite greatness and goodness of God, joined to a true sense of our own wretchedness and proclivity to evil ; in loving God and hating ourselves ; in humbling ourselves not only before him, but, for his sake, before all men ; in renouncing entirely our own will in order to follow his ; and to crown the work, in doing all this for the sole glory of his holy name, with no other view than to please him, on no other motive than that he ought to be loved and served by all his creatures.

Such are the dictates of that law of love which the Holy Ghost has engraven on the hearts of the righteous ; thus it is we are to practice that self-denial so earnestly recommended by our Saviour in the Gospel ; this it is which renders his yoke so sweet and his burthen so light ; in fine, herein consists that perfect obedience our divine Master has so much enforced both by word and example. Since therefore you aspire to the highest degree of perfection, you must wage continual war with yourself, and employ your whole force in demolishing every vicious inclination, though never so trivial. Consequently, in pre-

paring for the combat, you must summon up all your resolution and courage : for no one shall be rewarded with a crown, who hath not fought courageously.

But remember, that as no war can be carried on with greater fierceness, the forces, no other than ourselves, being equal on both sides ; so the victory when gained is most pleasing to God, and most glorious to the Conqueror. For whoever has the courage to conquer his passions, to subdue his appetites, and repulse even the least motions of his own will, performs an action more meritorious in the sight of God, than if, without this he should tear his flesh with the sharpest disciplines, fast with greater austerity than the ancient Fathers of the Desert, or convert multitudes of sinners.

It is true, considering things in themselves, the conversion of a soul is doubtless infinitely more acceptable to the divine Majesty, than the mortifying a disorderly affection ; yet every one in his own particular ought to begin with what is immediately required of him. Now what God expects at our hands before all things, is a serious application

to the subduing our passions; and this is more properly doing our duty, than if, with unbridled appetites, we should do him greater service.

Thus, being apprized what Christian perfection is, and that, in order to attain it, you must resolve on a perpetual War with yourself, begin with providing yourself four things, as so many weapons without which it is impossible to gain the victory in this SPIRITUAL COMBAT. These four things are, a diffidence of yourself, a confidence in God, a good use of the Faculties of body and mind, and the duty of Prayer. Of these, through God's grace, we shall treat clearly and succinctly in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Of diffidence of Ourselves.

DIFFIDENCE of ourselves is so absolutely requisite in the SPIRITUAL COMBAT, that without this virtue we must not expect to defeat the slightest of our passions, much less to gain a complete victory. This important truth ought to be deeply imprinted in our

breasts ; for though we are in ourselves a mere nothing, we are too apt to entertain a conceit of our own abilities, and falsely conclude that we are something. This vice springs from the corruption of our nature ; but the more natural, the more difficult to be discovered. But God, from whom nothing is hid, looks upon it with horror, because it is his will that we should be convinced we have neither virtue nor grace but what comes from him alone, and that without him we are incapable of one meritorious thought.

But notwithstanding this diffidence of our own strength be a gift from Heaven, and bestowed by God on those he loves, sometimes by his holy inspiration, sometimes by severe afflictions or temptations almost insuperable, and other ways unknown to us, yet he expects we should exert all our abilities for obtaining it. Which we shall certainly do, if, with the grace of God, we seriously employ the four following means.

The first is, to consider attentively our own wretchedness, and that being in ourselves nothing, we are incapable of doing the least good, or advancing

the least step towards Heaven without assistance from above.

The second is, to beg of God, with great humility and fervour, this signal virtue, which must come from him alone. Let us begin with acknowledging not only that we do not possess it, but that of ourselves we are utterly incapable of acquiring it. Then let us cast ourselves at the feet of our Lord, and frequently importune him to grant our request, and this with a firm confidence of being heard, provided we wait with patience the effect of our prayer, and persevere in it as long as it shall please the divine Providence.

The third is, to accustom ourselves by degrees to be diffident of our own strength, to dread the illusions of our own mind, the strong propensity of our nature to sin, and the terrible number of enemies which surround us, whose subtilty, experience and force, far surpass ours, who can transform themselves into angels of light, and lie continually in wait for us as we advance towards Heaven.

The fourth is, that as often as we commit a fault, we enter into ourselves in order to discover the excess of our

own weakness; for God never permits us to fall, but that we may see better into ourselves, that we may learn to despise such vile creatures as we are, and to desire sincerely to be despised by others; without this we must not hope to obtain a diffidence of ourselves, which is founded on humility, and a conviction of our own wretchedness.

In effect, whoever proposes to approach the eternal truth, and fountain of all light, must doubtless know himself thoroughly, and not imitate the pride of those who gain no other knowledge than what their sins afford, and only then begin to open their eyes when they are plunged into some shameful and unforeseen disorder; which happens through God's permission, that they may know their own weakness, and by a fatal experience learn not to confide in their own strength. But God seldom applies so severe a remedy against their presumption, but when more favourable means have failed.

In a word, he permits persons to fall more or less in proportion to their pride; and if there were any as free from pride as the Blessed Virgin, I dare pronounce they would never fall. As often there-

fore as you commit a fault, have immediate recourse to the knowledge of yourself; earnestly beseech our Lord to enlighten you, that you may see yourself as you are in his sight, and no more presume on your strength. Otherwise you will fall again into the same faults, or perhaps much greater, to the eternal ruin of your soul.

CHAPTER III.

Of Confidence in God.

ALTHOUGH a diffidence of ourselves be absolutely necessary in the SPIRITUAL COMBAT, as I have just now shewn, nevertheless, if this is all we have to trust to, we shall soon be put to flight, plundered and subdued by the enemy. To it therefore we must join a firm confidence in God the author of all good, and from whom alone the victory must be expected. For if it be certain that of ourselves we are nothing, dangerous and continual misfortunes will attend us; and reason will suggest a diffidence of our own strength: but if we are fully convinced of our weakness, we shall gain through the assistance of

God, very signal advantages over our enemies, nothing being of greater efficacy for obtaining the assistance of Heaven, than placing a noble confidence in God. We have four means of acquiring this excellent virtue.

The first is to ask it with great humility.

The second is, to contemplate with a lively faith, the immense power and infinite wisdom of that Supreme Being, to whom nothing is difficult, whose goodness knows no limits, whose love for those who serve him, is ever ready to furnish them with whatever is requisite for their spiritual life, and gaining a complete victory over themselves.

All that he demands of them is to have recourse to him with an entire confidence.—And can any thing be more reasonable? Is it possible that the amiable Shepherd (Luke xv.) who for upwards of thirty-three years sought after the lost sheep through rough and thorny ways, with so much pain that it cost him the last drop of his sacred blood; is it possible I say, that so good a Shepherd, seeing at last his strayed sheep returning to him with a design of being guided for the future by him alone,

and with a sincere, though yet perhaps but weak intention to obey him, he should not look upon it with pity, listen to its cries, nor bear it upon his shoulders to the fold? doubtless he is greatly pleased to see it united again to the flock, and invites the Angels to rejoice with him on the occasion.

For if he searches so diligently after the drachm in the Gospel, by which the sinner is figured, if he leave nothing untouched to find it, can he reject those, who, like sheep longing to behold their Shepherd, return towards the fold? Can it be imagined that the Spouse of our souls, who ardently seeks to take possession of our hearts; whose greatest delight is to communicate himself to us, and heap continual blessings on us; what likelihood is there, but that finding the door open, and hearing us beg to be honoured with his presence, he will vouchsafe to grant our request?

The third means of acquiring this salutary confidence, is frequently to call to mind what we are assured of in the holy Scriptures, those oracles of truth, in a thousand different places, that no one who puts his trust in God shall be confounded.

The fourth means of acquiring both a diffidence of ourselves and confidence in God, is that when we have any good action to perform, or some failing to encounter, before we enter upon it, we cast our eyes upon our own weakness on one side, and on the other contemplate the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and that balancing what we fear from ourselves, with what we hope from God, we courageously undergo the greatest difficulties and severest trials. With these arms joined to prayer, as we shall see hereafter, we shall be enabled to execute the greatest designs, and gain complete victories.

But if we neglect this method, though we may flatter ourselves we are actuated by a principle of confidence in God, we shall generally be deceived; because presumption is so very natural to man, that it even insinuates itself imperceptibly into the confidence he imagines he has in God, and the diffidence he fancies he has of himself.—Consequently in order to banish entirely all presumption, and to sanctify every action with the two virtues opposite to this vice, the consideration of his own weakness must necessarily precede that of the di-

vine Power, and both of them be previous to all undertakings.

CHAPTER IV.

How to discover whether we truly diffide in ourselves and place our confidence in God.

THE presumptuous man is persuaded he has acquired a diffidence of himself and a confidence in God ; but this mistake is never more plainly discovered than when some fault is committed ; for, if he gives way to vexation and despair of advancing in the way of virtue, it is evident he placed his confidence in himself, not in God ; and the greater the anxiety and despondence, the greater certainty of his guilt.

For he who much diffides in himself, and places great confidence in God, should he commit a fault, he is not at all surprised, he does not abandon himself to a perplexing vexation ; he justly attributes what has happened to his own weakness, and a want of due confidence in God.—Hence he learns to diffide still more in himself, and places all his hopes in the assistance of the Almighty. He

detests beyond all things the sin he has fallen into; he condemns that passion or criminal habit which occasioned his fall: he conceives a lively sorrow for having offended his God: but his sorrow, ever attended with peace of mind, does not interrupt the method he has laid down, or prevent his pursuing his enemies to their final destruction.

I sincerely wish, that what has been here advanced were attentively considered by many who think themselves very devout, yet from the moment they commit a fault will not be pacified, but hurry away to their director, more to rid themselves of the vexation arising from self-love, than out of any other motive; though their principal care should be to wash away the guilt of sin in the sacrament of penance, and fortify themselves with that of the Eucharist against a relapse.

CHAPTER V.

Of the mistakes of many who esteem pusillanimity a virtue.

THERE is another illusion too common in devotion which gives the

name of virtue to that fear and anxiety arising from sin.—For, though this vexation be accompanied with some sorrow, yet it is founded on pride, and a secret presumption a person entertains of his own strength. Thus he, who fancying himself far advanced in virtue, looks with too much indifference on temptations, yet finds by woful experience, that like other men he is subject to weakness; he is astonished at his fall, and finding himself deceived in his expectation, gives a loose to anguish and despair.

This never befalls the humble soul, who presumes not on her own strength, but places her trust in God alone. For if she commits a fault, it occasions no surprise or vexation, because she discovers by that light of truth which is her guide, that her fall is owing to her natural unsteadiness and frailty.

CHAPTER VI.

Farther advice of great efficacy for obtaining a diffidence of ourselves and a confidence in God.

AS all our force for conquering the enemy, springs from a diffidence of our-

selves and a confidence in God, I think it incumbent on me to give some further advice, very necessary for obtaining these virtues.

In the first place, let every one be fully persuaded, that neither all possible qualifications, whether natural or acquired, nor all supernatural gifts or perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, nor even whole ages spent in the service of his Creator, can enable him to do the will of God and comply with his duty, unless the hand of the Almighty supports him as often as any good action is to be done, temptation to be overcome, dangers avoided, or crosses to be taken up, which Providence shall please to ordain. Let him therefore place this truth before his eyes every day, hour, and moment of his life; that he may be ever mindful of it, and thus banish all presumption, never rashly daring to confide in himself.

But in order to acquire an entire confidence in God, we must firmly believe that he is equally able to subdue all his enemies, whether many or few, strong or weak, experienced or inexperienced. Consequently, though a soul should be overwhelmed by sins, though

she were subject to all the defects imaginable ; though she had laboured in vain to disengage herself from vice, and follow virtue ; though she should even find her propensity to evil increase daily, instead of advancing in virtue, yet she must not fail to place her confidence in God, she must not be discouraged, or abandon her spiritual works ; on the contrary, she ought to excite herself to new fervour, and redouble her efforts against the enemy. For in this sort of combat, the victory is sure to attend him who has the courage not to throw down his arms, or lay aside his confidence in God, whose assistance is never wanting to such as fight his battles, though he may sometimes permit them to be wounded. Persevere therefore to the end, and on this the victory depends. As to the rest, he who fights for God's cause, who places his entire trust in him, finds a speedy and efficacious remedy for the wounds he receives ; and when he least expects it, sees his enemy at his feet.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the right use of our faculties ; and first, that the understanding be free from ignorance and curiosity.

IF we engage in the SPIRITUAL COMBAT, with no other weapons than a diffidence of ourselves and a confidence in God, we shall not only be disappointed of the victory over our passions, but must expect to commit great oversights very frequently. It is therefore necessary to employ likewise a right use of the faculties both of body and soul ; the third means we proposed as requisite for attaining to perfection.

Let us begin with regulating the understanding and the will. The understanding must be exempt from two great defects, under which it frequently labours. The one is ignorance, which prevents its attaining truth, the proper object of its inquiries. By frequent use of the darkness surrounding, it must be dispelled, that it may clearly discern how to cleanse the soul of all irregular affections, and adorn her with the

necessary virtues.—The means of executing this are as follows.

The first and principal is prayer, by which is asked the light of the Holy Ghost, who never rejects such as seek God in earnest, who delight in fulfilling his law, and in all occurrences submit their own judgment to that of their superiors.

The second is a continual application to examine seriously and diligently every object, in order to distinguish good from evil, and form a judgment not from outward appearances, the testimony of our senses, or the notions of a corrupt world, but suitable to the idea the Holy Ghost annexes to it. Thus we shall clearly discern, that what the world pursues with such eagerness and affection is mere vanity and illusion; that ambition and pleasure are dreams, which, when passed, are succeeded by vexation and regret, that ignominy is a subject of glory, and sufferings the source of joy; that nothing can be more noble, nor approach nearer to the divine nature than to pardon those that injure us, and return good for evil; that it is greater to despise the world, than to have it at command; that it is infinitely preferable to submit to the mean-

est of mankind for God's sake, than to give law to kings and princes; that an humble knowledge of ourselves surpasses the sublimest sciences; in fine, that greater praise is due to him who curbs his passions on the most trivial occasions, than him who takes the strongest cities, defeats whole armies, or even works miracles and raises the dead to life.

CHAPTER VIII.

*Of the obstacle which prevents our forming a right judgment of things :
How we may be assisted in it.*

THE difficulty of forming a right judgment of such things as we have just now mentioned, and many others, arises from a hasty notion of love and hatred we are apt to conceive of them at their first appearance; and our reason being prejudiced by such blind passions, every thing appears in a far different light from that in which it ought to be considered. Whoever, therefore, desires to secure himself from so dangerous and common an illusion, must carefully preserve his heart free from all inordinate affections.

When an object presents itself, let the understanding with mature deliberation weigh its merits, before the will be suffered to embrace it if agreeable, or reject it if otherwise.

For, whilst the understanding remains unbiassed by the passions, it will easily distinguish between truth and falsehood, between real evil under the appearance of good, and real good under the false appearance of evil.—Whereas, no sooner is the will moved by the object either to love or hatred, but the understanding becomes incapable of forming a just notion of it; because the affection, by disguising it, imprints a false idea, and then being presented again to the will, the faculty already prepossessed, redoubles its love or hatred, exceeds all bounds, and is utterly deaf to the voice of reason.

In such monstrous confusion, the understanding plunges deeper and deeper into error, and represents the object to the will with heightened colours of good or evil.

Thus, whenever the rule I before laid down, and which on this occasion is of the greatest importance, happens to be neglected, two most noble faculties of

the soul are bewildered in a maze of error, darkness and confusion. Happy are those, who, void of all attachment to creatures, endeavour to discern the true nature of things, before they suffer their affections to be engaged; who frame their judgment by the dictates of reason, but especially by those supernatural lights the Holy Ghost is pleased to communicate either immediately from himself, or by those he has appointed for our guides.

But remember that this advice ought oftentimes more exactly to be followed in those things which of themselves are commendable, than in those which are not entirely so, because of the greater danger of being deceived, and the prejudice and eagerness they generally occasion. Let nothing therefore be done rashly, since a single circumstance of time or place, not observed, may spoil all, and great fault be committed in the very manner and order of the performance; as is the case of many who have wrought their own perdition in the practice of the most sanctified exercises.

CHAPTER IX.

Another means for preventing the understanding's being deceived in its choice.

ANOTHER vice, from which the understanding ought to be entirely free, is curiosity. For if we indulge ourselves in vain, frivolous or sinful speculations, our minds will become incapable of choosing what is most proper for mortifying our disorderly affections. Let us therefore be dead to all worldly things, and utterly neglect them, unless absolutely necessary, even though not criminal in themselves; let us rein in our minds, and not suffer them to range at large on a variety of objects; let us render them insensible to all profane speculations; let us not listen to rumours; let us shun all such as are ever gaping after news; let us look upon the various revolutions of this lower orb, with the same indifference as if they were only dreams. Even with respect to heavenly things, let discretion be your guide; let us not soar too high, let our greatest ambition be to have continually before our eyes Christ

crucified, to know the particulars of his life and death, and what he requires of us. Beyond this let us not seek any thing, and we shall please that divine Master whose true disciples ask nothing of him but what may contribute to their doing his holy will.—Whatever desires or search exceeds this, it is no other than self-conceit, a spiritual pride, and a snare of the Devil.

Such as regulate their conduct in this manner, will be proof against the attacks of the old Serpent, who seeing in the fervour of persons entering upon spiritual exercises, a will fixed and resolute, tries his subtilities on their understanding, that through it he may work his way to their will, and thus master both those faculties.

In order to succeed, he swells their imagination in time of prayer, suggesting elevated sentiments; especially to such as are naturally curious, penetrating, and subject to self-conceit, and a fondness of their own notions.

His aim is to amuse them with vain speculations, and the sensible pleasure arising from them, that, lulled with a false notion of enjoying God, they may forget to cleanse their hearts, to study

themselves, and practice mortification ; thus elated with pride, they idolize their understanding, and accustomed to consult nobody but themselves, they are at last persuaded that they have no further occasion for the assistance and advice of others.

This is a pernicious and almost an incurable evil ; as it is much more difficult to remedy the pride of the understanding than that of the heart ; for the pride of the heart is no sooner discovered by the understanding but it may be removed by a voluntary submission to the orders of proper superiors. Whereas, if a person takes it into his head, and obstinately persists in maintaining that he is wiser than those that are placed over him, how is he to be undeceived ? Which way will he discover his error ?—To whose judgment will he submit, so long as he fancies himself wiser than all the world ?—If the understanding, that eye of the soul, and which alone can discover and rectify the vanity of the heart, be itself blind and swelled with pride, who shall undertake to cure its maladies ?—If the light changes to darkness, if the rule is

erroneous, what must become of the rest?

Let us therefore guard against so pernicious an evil, and never suffer it to take possession of our minds; let us accustom ourselves to acquiesce in the judgment of others, without carrying our notions of spirituality too high; let us grow enamoured with that folly and simplicity so much recommended by the apostle (1 Cor. iii. 18.) and we shall surpass Solomon himself in wisdom.

CHAPTER X.

Of the exercise of the will, and of the end to which all our actions, interior and exterior, ought to be directed.

HAVING rectified the faults of the understanding we must proceed to those of the will, that, being divested of its inclinations, it may become entirely devoted to the will of God.

It must be observed, that it is not sufficient to desire, or even to execute what is most pleasing to God, but it is also requisite to desire and to perform it from a motion of his grace, and out of a willingness to please him. Here will arise

the greatest struggle with our nature, ever so greedy of being pleased, that even in spiritual things above others, it seeks its own satisfaction, resting there with the less scruple, as no evil appears. Hence it comes, that when we enter upon works of piety, our impulse proceeds not from the sole view of doing the will of God, but from a sensible pleasure which often accompanies such exercises.

And the illusion is still more subtle, as the object of our affection is more commendable in itself. Who would imagine that self-love, criminal as it is, should prompt us to unite ourselves to God? And that desiring to possess him, we should have more regard to our own interest than his glory, and the accomplishment of his holy will, which nevertheless ought to be the sole intention of those who love him, seek him, and make profession of keeping his law. In order to avoid so dangerous a rock, and to habituate ourselves not to desire or put in practice any thing but by the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and with a pure intention of honouring him, who will be not only the first Principle, but also the last End of all our actions, the following method must be observed.

When an opportunity offers of performing some pious works, let us be watchful lest our hearts fix upon it before we raise our minds to God, that we may know whether it be according to his will, and whether we desire it purely because it is pleasing to him. Our will being thus prevented and directed by the will of God, tends to no other motive than that of conforming entirely to him and advancing his glory. The same method ought to be observed in rejecting what is contrary to his will; the first motion ought to be to raise our minds to God; to know that it is displeasing to him; and to be satisfied, that in rejecting it, we shall act in conformity to his holy will.

But we must remember it is with great difficulty that we discover the artifices of our corrupt nature, which, ever fond of centring under specious pretexts all things in itself, flatters us with a persuasion, that in all our actions we have no other view than to please God. Hence it comes, that in what we embrace or reject, only in reality to humour ourselves, we erroneously imagine that we act on a principle of pleasing, or a dread of displeasing our Sovereign

Lord. The most efficacious remedy against evil is a purity of heart, which every one who engages in the spiritual combat must propose to obtain, by putting off the old man, and clothing themselves with the new.

The application of this divine remedy consists in carefully divesting ourselves of all human motives in every thing we undertake, pursuing or rejecting nothing but in conformity to the will of God. Perhaps in every thing we do, and particularly in the silent motions of the heart, or those exterior actions which are quickly over, we may not always perceive the influence of this motive; at least let us be so disposed, that virtually, and as it were through habit, we do nothing but with a view of pleasing God alone. But in actions which last any time, this virtual intention will not suffice; it ought to be frequently renewed and cultivated in its greatest purity and fervour; for otherwise we shall run great hazard of being deluded by self-love, which always preferring the creature before the Creator, bewitches in such a manner, that in a short time we are imperceptibly drawn from the intention we first formed.

Well-meaning persons, but who are not sufficiently on their guard, generally set out with no other view than that of pleasing God; yet by degrees they suffer themselves, without perceiving it, to be drawn away by vain glory: So that, forgetting the Divine will which first influenced them, they are entirely attached to the satisfaction arising from what they do, and the advantage and credit they may expect from it.

And if it happens, that when they think they are doing wonders, Providence permits them to be interrupted either by sickness or any other accident, they are presently dissatisfied, murmuring against every one about them, and sometimes against God himself. This plainly shews that the motive and spring of their actions was bad. For whoever acts from the influence of Divine grace, and with the sole view of pleasing God, is indifferent as to what he is employed in; or if he is bent on any thing particular, the manner and time of doing it is entirely submitted to Providence, being perfectly resigned whatever success attends his undertakings, having nothing at heart but the accomplishment of the Divine will.

Let every one therefore recollect himself, and direct all his actions to so excellent and so noble an end. And if he finds himself disposed to perform any work of piety in order to avoid the punishment or deserve the rewards of the next life, let him propose as the end of his undertaking the will of God, who requires of us to avoid hell and gain Heaven. It is not to be imagined what efficacy this motive has, since the least action, although never so inconsiderable, performed for his holy sake, far surpasses many others, though of much greater moment, when executed with another view. Upon this principle a small alms given solely in honour of God, is infinitely more agreeable to him, than if, upon any other motive, large possessions are abandoned, even with a view of gaining the kingdom of Heaven; not but that such a motive is highly commendable in itself and worthy of our regard.

This holy practice of performing our actions with the sole intention of pleasing God, may carry some difficulty with it at first, but time will render it familiar and even delightful, if we use ourselves to seek God in the sincerity of our hearts, if we sigh continually after

him as the only and sovereign good, deserving to be sought, valued, and loved by all his creatures beyond any thing else. The more attentively we contemplate the greatness and goodness of God, the more frequently and tenderly will our affections tend to that divine object; and thus we shall sooner, and with less difficulty, attain a habit of directing all our actions to his glory.

Finally, we may assign as a means of always acting on so excellent and elevated a motive, the fervent begging of our Lord for his grace, and the frequent consideration of the infinite benefits he has already bestowed upon us, and every moment continues to repeat, through an undeserved and disinterested affection.

CHAPTER XI.

Some considerations which may incline the will to desire nothing but in conformity with God.

IN order to induce our will to act with an exact compliance to the will of God, and promote his glory, let us remember that he has set the example of

loving and honouring us a thousand different ways. He drew us out of nothing, created us after his own likeness, and all other things for our use : In redeeming us, he would not employ the brightest angel, but his only Son, who paid the price of the world, not with silver or gold, which are perishable things, but with his sacred blood, and that by a death not less ignominious than cruel : He watches continually over us for our security against the fury of our enemies, fights for us by his holy grace, and in order both to nourish and strengthen us, is ever ready to feed us with the precious body of his Son in the sacrament of the altar.

Are not these convincing proofs of the excessive love which God bears to us ? Who can comprehend the immensity of his charity for such vile wretches, or what ought to be our gratitude towards so gracious a benefactor ? And if the great ones of this world think themselves obliged to make some return for the respect paid them, even by those whom birth or fortune has made their inferiors, what return ought not the worms of the earth to make, when honoured with such signal marks of love and esteem by

the sovereign Lord of the Universe: Let us not forget in particular, that his infinite majesty is worthy to be served by us through a principle of singular love, which has no other view than his sole will and pleasure.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the different wills in man which continually oppose each other.

THERE are two wills in man, the one superior, the other inferior. The first is usually called reason, the second we name appetite, sensuality, passion. Nevertheless, as man, properly speaking, is only such by his reason, he is not said to will any thing by the first motion of the appetite, unless the superior will confirms the choice.

Thus our whole spiritual warfare consists in this, that the rational will being placed as it were, between the Divine will above it, and the sensual will below it, is assaulted on both sides; God moving it by his grace, and the flesh by its solicitations, both contending for the victory. Hence arise inconceivable difficulties, when persons, who

during their youth have contracted vicious habits, come to a resolution of changing their life, mortifying their passions, and breaking with the world, in order to devote themselves to the service of God. For their will is violently assaulted by the Divine Will, and its own sensual appetites, and which way soever it turns, it is with great difficulty that it withstands such fierce attacks.

This onset is not experienced by those, who, having been long habituated to virtue or vice, are fixed in their manner of living; the virtuous conforming themselves to the will of God, the vicious gratifying their sensual appetites. But let no one flatter himself that he shall be able to acquire virtue and serve God in a due manner, unless he is resolved to use violence with himself, and surmount the difficulty he will experience in quitting the pleasures great or little, to which he has had any criminal attachment.

Hence it is that few entertain any great degree of perfection; for after conquering the worst vice, undergoing great labours, they lose courage and fail to pursue their victory, though only

small trials are to follow, for subduing the feeble remains of their own will and for extinguishing several lesser passions, which gathering strength again, at last take full possession of their hearts.

Of these, many, for example, do not take what belongs to others, but are passionately attached to what is their own. They do not employ unwarrantable methods of aggrandizing themselves, yet far from contemning advancement, they are fond of it, and pursue it by such means as they think lawful. They observe appointed fasts, but indulge themselves on other days in the most delicious viands. They are careful not to transgress in point of chastity, but will not be debarred their favourite amusements, though great obstacles to a spiritual life and a strict union with God.

Since therefore all these things are highly dangerous, particularly for those who are not aware of their bad consequences, every one ought to avoid them with the greatest caution : Without this we may be assured that most of our good works will be attended with slothfulness, self-love, human respects, hid-

den imperfections, self-conceit, a desire of being remarked and applauded by others. Those who are negligent in this particular, not only make no progress in the way of salvation, but even lose ground, and are in danger of falling back to their former vicious courses, because they do not aim at solid virtue, being insensible of the great favour God has done them in their deliverance from the tyranny of the Devil; because they are ignorant of the danger which surrounds them, and are bewitched by false and deceitful peace.

We must not here omit to point out an illusion the more to be dreaded as it is not easily discovered. Many who enter upon a spiritual life, loving themselves too well, (if such may be said to love themselves) single out such exercises as are most pleasing, but shun whatever is disagreeable to their humours, or proper for mortifying their passions, against which their whole force ought to be turned in the spiritual combat. Too much pains cannot be taken to make them relish the difficulty they find in conquering their inclinations, for on this all depends; and the greater resolution they manifest in getting over

the first obstacles which occur, the speedier and more signal victory attends them. Let them therefore courageously expect nothing but difficulty in this warfare, and wait with patience for the victory and its fruits, and then they may depend upon not being disappointed.

CHAPTER XIII.

In what manner we are to encounter Sensuality: and what acts ought to proceed from the will, in order to acquire virtuous habits.

WHENEVER we find the possession of our hearts contended for by our Creator on one side, and sensuality on the other, if we observe the following methods, victory will attend the cause of Heaven.

1. The first motions of the sensual appetite in opposition to reason, must be carefully suppressed, lest the will should give its consent.

2. This being done, they may be suffered to return in order to give them a greater overthrow.

3. They may be even allowed a third

trial, in order to accustom ourselves to repulse them with a generous disdain. But it must be observed, these methods of stirring up passions are not to take place when chastity is concerned, of which we shall speak hereafter.

4. In fine, it is of great importance to form acts of those virtues which are contrary to the vicious inclinations we encounter. The following example will place this in a clear light.

Perhaps you are subject to impatience. Recollect yourself, and observe what passes in your mind. You will plainly see that the vexation which first arose in the inferior appetite, endeavours to gain the will and the superior appetite. Then, as I mentioned in the first place, be sure to put a stop to its career, and prevent it from prevailing on the will. Quit not the field till your enemy be entirely subdued, and reduced to a due subjection to reason.

But see the subtlety of the wicked fiend! When he finds you courageously resist any impetuous passion, he not only desists from kindling it in your heart, but even will assist in quenching the fire for the present. His design is to prevent your attaining the contrary

virtue by a steady resistance, and to swell you with the vanity of thinking yourself a greater warrior for despatching your enemy in so short a time. It is necessary therefore to renew the charge, calling to mind what first moved you to impatience and disquiet, and when you perceive the same emotion to rise in the inferior appetite, excite the whole force of your will to suppress it.

But as it frequently happens, that after the most strenuous endeavours against the enemy, and this on a principle of doing our duty and pleasing God; as, I say, after all this, we are not entirely out of danger of being defeated in a third attack, we must once more encounter the passion we contended with, and conceive not only a hatred, but even a disdain and horror of it.

In fine, if you seek to adorn your soul with virtue, and acquire habitual sanctity, it will be requisite to form frequent acts of the contrary virtue to your vicious inclinations. For example, if you would acquire a consummate meekness, you must not think it sufficient to employ the three sorts of weapons above-mentioned for overcoming all impa-

tience occasioned by the contempt you undergo from others; you must proceed even to an affection for that very contempt; to wish for its being repeated, and that too by the same persons, to resolve to suffer patiently still greater insults.

The reason why we are under a necessity of forming acts directly contrary to the failings we encounter, if we would attain perfection, is this—other acts of virtue, however efficacious and frequent, do not strike directly at the root of the evil. Thus to continue the former example, though you give no consent to the motions of anger, but encounter them in the several ways we have described; yet be assured, that unless you accustom yourself to relish contempt, and rejoice in it, you will never wholly root out the particular vice of intolerance, which springs from a dread of being despised, and a fondness for the opinion of men. For as long as the root of that weed is not torn away, so long will it sprout afresh and your virtue will decay; nay, in time, you may find yourself stript of all virtuous habits, and in continual hazard of falling into your past disorders.

Never hope therefore to acquire solid virtues unless by forming frequent acts directly opposite, you destroy the failings to which you are subject. I say by frequent acts, for as many sins are requisite for contracting a vicious habit, in the same manner frequent acts are necessary for attaining a virtuous habit. And even a greater number of acts must be employed in the latter case than in the former, because our corrupt nature opposes itself on the one side, as much as it assists on the other.

Observe, moreover, that where the virtue sought for is not to be acquired without forming exterior acts corresponding to the interior ones, as it happens in regard to patience, you must not only speak with much charity and mildness to those who have injured you, however great the offence may be, but even assist them to the utmost of your abilities. And notwithstanding such acts, whether interior or exterior, may seem of little moment, and be attended with great repugnance, be sure not to omit them, for however faint they may appear, they will certainly support you in the combat, and greatly contribute to your gaining the victory.

Watch therefore over your mind, and do not content yourself with only restraining the most violent sallies of your passions, resist the most minute, as they generally dispose to greater, and pave the way to confirmed vicious habits. Does not experience teach us, that many who are negligent in mortifying their passions on trivial occasions, though in things of greater moment they have shown their courage; does not experience, I say, teach us that they are unexpectedly beset and furiously attacked by enemies who had never been entirely defeated?

There is still one thing more I must here recommend with great earnestness; which is, to mortify your inclinations, even when the object is in itself lawful, but not necessary. The advantage arising from hence will be very considerable; your victory on other occasions will be much facilitated, you will gain experience and strength against temptations, and render yourself very acceptable to God by your behaviour. I deal sincerely with you; do not fail to exert yourself in the holy practices I have mentioned, and which are absolutely requisite for a perfect

reformation of your interior. You will speedily gain a most glorious victory over yourself. You will advance with great rapidity in the way of virtue, and your life become, not in appearance only, but truly spiritual.

Whereas if you pursue other methods, however excellent you may fancy them, though you taste the greatest spiritual delights; though you may imagine yourself intimately united to God, yet depend upon it you will never acquire solid virtue, nor know what true spirituality is, which we have shown in the first chapter does not consist in exercises agreeable and soothing to nature, but in such as crucify it and all its irregular affections.

Thus it is that man, renewed by the virtues he has acquired, unites himself strictly to his Creator and crucified Saviour. Likewise it is certain, that as vicious habits are contracted by several acts of the will, yielding to sensual appetites, in the same manner Evangelical perfection is attained by repeated acts of the will conforming itself to the will of God, who moves it to the practice of different virtues at different times. And, as the will incurs no guilt, although the

whole force of the inferior appetite be exerted for that effect without its own consent; so on the other side it cannot be sanctified and united to God, whatever strength of grace be employed to attract it, unless it co-operates with that grace by acts not only interior, but even exterior if requisite.

CHAPTER XIV.

How we are to behave when the Will seems to be overpowered, and unable to resist the sensual appetites.

IF at any time you are apprehensive lest the will should give way to the inferior appetite, or other enemies which strive to master it, and if you perceive your courage and resolution begin to fail, nevertheless maintain your ground—do not quit the field, for you ought to look upon the victory as your own, so long as you are not entirely overcome. And, indeed, as your will does not stand in need of the inferior appetite's consent for making its choice, in the same manner whatever violence this domestic enemy may use, still the liberty of the will remains inviolate. For it has received from the Almighty so absolute a

dominion, that all the senses, the wicked spirits, and the whole creation leagued together, cannot prejudice the liberty it enjoys of acting as often, in what manner, and for what end it pleases.

But if sometimes temptations press so hard upon you, that your will, almost overpowered, seems to want sufficient strength to resist any longer, be sure not to be disheartened, or throw down your arms: cry out and defend yourself, saying to the Tempter, "Begone, infernal Fiend! I'll die a thousand deaths before I yield to thy vile suggestions." Behave like one who is engaged with an obstinate adversary, and not being able to pierce him with the point, attacks him with the hilt of his sword—see how he strives to disengage himself, how he retires, only to return with greater vigour, and despatch his enemy with one fatal blow. This will teach you to retire frequently into yourself, and recollect that of yourself you are nothing, and unable to do any thing, and from thence place a generous confidence in the almighty power of God; that you may be enabled by his holy grace to attack and finally vanquish the passions which molest you.

It is here you must cry out, help me, O Lord ! My God assist me ! Jesus ! Mary ! abandon not your servant ! Let me not fall a prey to this temptation.

As often as the enemy gives you so much respite, call in your understanding to the assistance of your will ; strengthen it with the several reflections proper to raise its courage and animate it anew to the fight. Thus, for example, if you are persecuted unjustly, or otherwise afflicted, and in the excess of uneasiness tempted to fall into vexation so as to lose all patience, endeavour to recover yourself by a serious reflection on these or the like points.

1. Examine whether you do not deserve the uneasiness you may suffer, and have not drawn it upon yourself. For if you are any ways to blame, it is fit that you bear patiently the anguish of a wound you yourself have occasioned.

2. But if you have nothing to reproach yourself with on this head, look back on past disorders, for which the Divine justice has not yet inflicted a punishment, nor you sufficiently expiated by a voluntary penance. And seeing that God, through his infinite mercy,

instead of a long punishment in the flames of Purgatory, or an eternal one in those of Hell, has appointed an easy and momentary one in this life, accept of it not only with resignation, but with joy and thanksgiving.

3. If you imagine, without any just grounds, that your faults are few, and your penitential works very considerable, remember the way to the kingdom of Heaven is narrow and full of tribulation.

4. Consider, moreover, that if you could discover another road, the dictates of ardent love should deter you from so much as thinking of it; since the Son of God, and all the saints after him, arrived there by no other than the thorny path of the Cross.

5. But what you ought to have in view on this and all other occasions, is the will of God, who loves you so tenderly as to be delighted with every heroic act of virtue you perform, and the return you make by your fidelity and courage to his immense love. Remember likewise that the more unjustly you suffer, and consequently the more grievous your affliction, the greater your merit is in the sight of God; for that in the

midst of your sufferings you adore his judgments, and submit with resignation to his Divine Providence, which draws good from the greatest evils, and makes the very malice of our enemies subservient to our eternal happiness.

CHAPTER XV.

Further advice how to acquit ourselves well in the fight: what enemies we ought to engage, and what courage is required for subduing them.

YOU have already seen how you must behave, in order to gain the victory over yourself, and attain the necessary virtues. But to do this with greater facility and expedition, we must not content ourselves with once signalizing our courage; it is requisite to return so often to the combat, especially when engaged with self-love, that we may at last esteem all those our friends, from whom we receive the most cruel and mortifying injuries. It frequently happens, as I observed before, that where this kind of combat is declined, the victories are attended with great difficulty, are very

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imperfect, less frequent, and soon lost again. Fight therefore with great resolution, let not the weakness of your nature be an excuse. If your strength fail you, beg more from God, who will not refuse what you ask.

Consider, that if the fury of your enemies be great, and their number immense, still the love which God bears you is infinitely greater. The Angels who protect you, and the Saints who intercede in your behalf, are still more numerous.

Even women, by these reflections, have acquired sufficient courage, have baffled the wisdom of the world, trampled on the allurements of the flesh, triumphed over the malice of the Devil. Be not therefore disheartened, though you may think it a difficult task to withstand the efforts of many enemies; that this warfare will not end but with your life, and that unavoidable ruin threatens you on all sides. For know, that neither the force nor artifice of your enemies can hurt you without the permission of him for whose honour you engage. And as he delights in this kind of combat, and as much as in him lies, exhorts every one to engage in it, he is so far from

suffering those who are bent upon your ruin to compass their wicked designs, that he will fight on your side, and sooner or later crown your endeavours with victory, though the combat should only end with your life.

All he demands of you is, that you defend yourself courageously, and, that notwithstanding any wounds you may possibly receive, you never lay down your arms nor quit the field. In fine, that you may not be wanting to your duty, remember this war is unavoidable, and that we must either fight or die; as the fury and obstinacy of your enemies is such, that all peace and truce with them is utterly impossible.

CHAPTER XVI.

That the Soldier of Christ must prepare early for the fight.

THE first thing you are to do when you awake, is to open the eyes of your soul, and consider yourself as in the field of battle facing your enemy, and under an absolute necessity of engaging or perishing for ever. Imagine you see before you the enemy, that particular

vice, or disorderly passion you are endeavouring to subdue; imagine, I say, that this hideous monster is coming to devour you. At the same time represent to yourself on your right hand Jesus Christ your invincible leader, attended by the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and whole legions of Angels and Saints, and particularly by the glorious Archangel St. Michael;—on your left hand behold Lucifer and his troops ready to support that passion or vice you contend with, and resolved to leave nothing undone to accomplish your overthrow.

Imagine you hear your Guardian Angel thus exhorting you: This day you must exert yourself in order to subdue your enemy, and all who seek your ruin. Take courage—let no vain fears or apprehensions seize you; since Christ your Captain is near at hand, with all the power of Heaven to protect you against all enemies, and to prevent their ever reducing you, either by force or treachery, under their subjection. Maintain your ground, use violence with yourself, whatever pain it may occasion—call aloud on Jesus and Mary—beg the assistance of all the Saints, and this being done depend upon gaining the victory.

However weak you may be—however formidable your enemies may seem either by their numbers or strength, still be not daunted ; the succours you have from Heaven are more powerful than all that Hell can send to destroy the grace of God in your soul. God, who created and redeemed you, is not less than almighty, and more desirous of your salvation than the Devil can be of your destruction.

Fight therefore valiantly, do not spare to mortify yourself ; for it is by making continual war on your disorderly affections and vicious habits that you will gain the victory, acquire the kingdom of Heaven, and unite your soul to God for all eternity. Begin to fight from this moment in the name of the Lord, armed with a diffidence of yourself, and confidence in God, prayer, and a right use of the several faculties of your soul.

With these arms attack your enemy, that predominant passion you design to subdue, either by a noble disdain, a courageous resistance, repeated acts of the contrary virtue, or whatever means Heaven furnishes you with for exterminating it out of your heart. Never rest till you have subdued it ; your perseve-

rance will be crowned by the sovereign Judge, who with the whole church triumphant is a witness of your behaviour.

I repeat it once more, you must not grow weary of this war. Consider that all are obliged to serve and please God, that there is an unavoidable necessity of fighting, since whoever flies exposes himself to be wounded and even destroyed; that after all, by revolting against God, and taking part with the world in a life of sensuality, the difficulties are not diminished, for both body and soul must suffer extremely when devoted to luxury and ambition. And what greater meanness can there be than not to dread much trouble in this life, succeeded by endless torments in the next—and yet shrink at small difficulties which must soon terminate in an eternity of bliss, and the never ending enjoyment of God.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of the order to be observed in encountering our Passions and Vices.

IT is of the greatest consequence to be well apprized of the order you must

observe in warring against your passions and vices, that you may not run on blindly and fight with the air as many do, losing all the fruits of their labour.

You are therefore to begin by recollecting yourself, in order to examine with great care what thoughts and affections your mind generally entertains; what passion predominates in your breasts, which you must single out as your greatest enemy, to be the first attacked. But if the Devil, in order to draw off your attention, should assail you from another quarter, you must turn to that side where the danger is most pressing, and then immediately return to your first design.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In what manner we ought to curb the sudden motions of our Passions.

IF you are not as yet able to bear patiently injuries, affronts, and many other evils of this life, you will accustom yourself to it by foreseeing and preparing for their reception. After you have discovered the nature of that passion from

which you suffer most, you must proceed to consider what persons you must have to deal with—what places or business you frequent, from whence you may discover what vexations are like to happen.

But if any unforeseen accident should happen, though it be of infinite advantage never to be surprised by any mortification or trouble, we shall point out the means of greatly alleviating it. The instant you find yourself affected by any unforeseen injurious treatment, put yourself on your guard, give not way to vexation, but raising your mind to God, consider what has happened to be an appointment of Heaven; that God himself, that tender father as he is, has no other view in permitting it but to purify you still more; and unite you still nearer to himself, and that he is infinitely pleased in seeing you cheerfully undergo the greatest trials for his sake.

After this, turn your thoughts on yourself, and thus upbraid your want of courage; cowardly wretch! What, dost thou shrink from a cross laid upon thee, not by this or that person, but from thy Father who is in Heaven? Then contemplating this cross, receive it not

only with submission, but even with joy, saying—O cross! appointed for me by Providence from the beginning: Cross! which the love of my crucified Jesus renders sweeter to me than the greatest sensual delights, fix me from this moment to thee, that I may be united to him, who, expiring in thy arms became my Redeemer.

But if you find yourself so much moved at first as to be incapable of raising your mind to God and that even your will is affected by it, at least put a stop to the evil here, and whatever disturbance it may have raised in your heart, spare no pains to conquer it, imploring the assistance of Heaven with great fervour. After all, the surest way to repress these first motions of disordered affections, is to endeavour to root out the cause of them beforehand. If you observe, for example, that through an over-great attachment to any thing, you are provoked as often as your inclinations are thwarted, break off that attachment and you will enjoy a perfect tranquillity.

In case the uneasiness you feel, proceeds not from a fondness for something pleasing, but from a dislike to a person

who upon all occasions is disagreeable to you ; the best remedy for this evil is to endeavour, notwithstanding the antipathy you feel, to love this person, not only as created to the same likeness of God, and redeemed with the same precious blood of Christ as yourself ; because in bearing patiently with such defects, you imitate your Heavenly Father, whose love and goodness is extended to all without exception.

CHAPTER XIX.

In what manner we ought to fight against Impurity.

THIS vice must be encountered in a different manner from others, and with greater resolution. In order to this we are to distinguish three several instants of time—the first, that which precedes the temptation—the second, during the temptation—the third, that which succeeds.

1. Before the time of temptation we must carefully avoid every, even the least occasion of sin, shunning all those persons whose company is dangerous. Or if we are under a necessity

of conversing with them, let it be done with all possible despatch; let modesty be visible in the countenance, and gravity season the discourse, which must be serious, not inclined to familiarity or mirth.

Presume not on your own strength, though after many years spent in the world you have been proof against the force of concupiscence. For the Devil of lust often achieves in one instant what whole years could not effect. Sometimes he is long in preparing for the assault; but then the blow is the severer, and the wound the more dangerous for being dissembled, and coming when least expected.

It must likewise be observed, and every day's experience shews it, that the danger is always greatest on those occasions where there is the least appearance of evil, because founded on the plausible pretences of kindred, gratitude, obligations—or in fine, the merit and virtue of the persons beloved. Impure inclinations imperceptibly insinuate themselves into such friendships, by frequent visits, too long conversations, and indiscreet familiarities, till the poison reaches the heart, and reason is so

far blinded as to connive at amorous glances, tender expressions, and jocose liberties in discourse, from whence violent and almost irresistible temptations arise.

Fly, therefore, with the utmost caution, all occasions of this sin, of which you are more susceptible than straw is of fire. Rely not on your own virtue, or a resolution you may have taken rather to die than offend God ; for however well disposed you may be to virtue, the frequency of such bewitching conversations will kindle a fire not to be extinguished. An impetuous desire of satisfying your passions will render you deaf to the remonstrances of your friends ; you will lose the fear of God, reputation, and even life itself will be set at nought ; no, not the flames of Hell will master the fury of those sensual fires kindled within your breast. Seek therefore your safety by flying, there is no other way of escaping, since too great confidence will end in eternal perdition.

2. Shun idleness ; consider what you have to do, and comply exactly with all the duties of your station in life.

3. Obey your superiors with great

alacrity ; perform what they order, and in things the most mortifying and contrary to your inclinations, shew the greater cheerfulness.

4. Never judge rashly of others, particularly in regard of impurity. If any are so unhappy as to fall into such disorders, and the thing become public, still you must not treat them with scorn and contempt, but pity their weakness, and endeavour to make an advantage of it by humbling yourself before the Almighty ; confessing that you are but dust and ashes—a mere nothing ; by redoubling your prayers, by flying with greater exactness all dangerous company, however little reason you may have to suspect it. For if you give yourself a liberty of judging hardly of your brethren, God will permit you, both for your punishment and amendment, to fall into the same faults for which you condemn others, that by such humiliation, discovering your own pride and rashness, you may seek the proper remedies for both.

And though it may possibly happen that you avoid such shameful sins, yet be assured that if you continue to form such rash judgments, you are in great danger of perishing.

5. If you perceive your heart to abound with spiritual comforts and delights, beware of taking a secret complacency in yourself—beware of imagining that you are arrived at perfection, or that the enemy is no longer capable of doing you any mischief, because you seem to hold him in the utmost scorn and contempt; for be assured, that the greatest circumspection is now requisite to prevent a relapse.

We are now to consider what regards the time of temptation. In the first place we must examine whether the cause from whence it proceeds be exterior or interior.

By exterior causes, I mean curiosity of the eyes or ears where decency suffers, excess in point of apparel, too tender friendships, and indiscreet familiarities. Modesty and decency are the proper remedies for this evil; they shut the ears and eyes against every thing that sullies the imagination; but the sovereign remedy, as we have already said, is to fly from all such occasions of sin.

Interior causes proceed from a too good plight of body, crowds of bad thoughts arising from wicked habits, or the suggestions of the Devil.

When the body has been too much indulged it must be mortified by fasting, discipline, watching, and other austerities—but always regulated by discretion and obedience.

As to unchaste thoughts from whatever source they arise, we may drive them away: First, by a diligent application to our several duties. Secondly, by prayer and meditation.

Order your prayer thus—When you perceive such thoughts presenting themselves, and like to make any impression, recollect yourself, and speaking to Christ crucified, cry out—“Sweet Jesus, haste to my relief, lest I fall a prey to my enemies.” Sometimes embracing a crucifix, representing your dying Saviour, kiss the marks of the sacred wounds on his feet, and say with great confidence and affection—O adorable, thrice holy wounds! imprint your figure in my heart, filled as it is with abomination, and preserve me from consenting to sin.

With regard to meditation, I am not of opinion, when the temptation is most violent, that you should (as several authors advise) in order to form a horror of impurity, consider the shameful and

insatiable nature of such sins, that they are followed by disgust, remorse, and vexation, often by the loss of fortune, health, life, honour, &c. The reason is, such considerations are not proper on the occasion, and frequently, instead of freeing us from danger, only serve to increase it—for if on the one hand the understanding drives away the evil thoughts, such reflections naturally call them back on the other.

Thus the surest way to be freed from them, is to remove not only them, but also the reflections directly contrary to them; since, in endeavouring to dissipate them by their contraries, we renew the impure ideas, and imprint them deeper without perceiving it. Satisfy yourself therefore with meditating on the life and death of our Saviour; and if, during this holy exercise, the same thoughts would return and be more troublesome than before, as it may possibly happen, be not discouraged nor abandon your meditation; far from exerting yourself in driving them away, slight and contemn such wretched artifices of the Devil—persist in meditating, with all attention possible, on the death of our Saviour, as nothing can be

more efficacious for putting the foul Fiend to flight, though he should be determined never to desist.

Conclude your meditation with the following or some such prayer; O my Creator and Redeemer, save me from my enemies through thy infinite goodness and the merits of thy bitter passion. But remember, in saying this, not to think on the particular vice from which you are endeavouring to free yourself, since the least reflection on it may be dangerous. Above all, be sure not to spend any time in disputing with yourself how far you may have given way to the temptation; such a scrutiny is an invention of the enemy, who, under the specious pretext of an imaginary duty, studies to renew the attack, or at least hopes to make some impression with the bad thoughts he had poured into your mind.

When, therefore, it is evident that you have consented to the evil, let it suffice to declare in a few words what has passed, to your Ghostly Father, and be ruled according to what he advises, without giving yourself any further trouble.

But be sure not to conceal any thing material, either through shame or any

other motive. For if humility is requisite for subduing our enemies in general, it is infinitely more so in the case before us, as this vice is for the greatest part a just punishment of pride.

When the temptation is vanquished, you are to behave thus. Though you should enjoy a perfect tranquillity and think yourself safe, fly nevertheless with the greatest care, all objects tending to temptation—shut them out from your mind entirely, though recommended with an appearance of virtue or some imaginary good. Such pretences are the illusions of a corrupt nature, or snares laid by the Devil, who will transform himself into an Angel of light, in order to drag you with him into the outward darkness of Hell itself.

CHAPTER XX.

In what manner we are to encounter Sloth.

THE making war against sloth is of the greatest importance, since this vice is not only an obstacle in our way to perfection, but delivers us over to the enemies of our salvation. If, therefore, your desire to fight against it, is in ear-

nest, begin with avoiding all curiosity and vain amusements; wean your affections from worldly things, and quit all employments that suit not with your station in life.

Strive assiduously to comply with the inspirations of Heaven, to execute the orders of your superiors, to do every thing in due time and manner: never hesitate a moment to do what is required; consider, the first delay brings on a second, this a third, and thus we lose ground—because the dread of labour increases, as does the love of ease, the more it is indulged. Hence comes that tedious backwardness in applying to business, or the total neglect of it; so distasteful is labour.

Thus is formed a habit of sloth, and hard it is to be shaken off, unless the shame which attends an indolent life happens to rouse us to greater diligence and application.

We must likewise observe, that sloth is a poison which spreads itself through all the faculties of the soul, infecting not only the will, by making labour odious to it, but also the understanding, blinding it in such a manner, that the resolutions of the slothful are generally

without effect; and what ought to be done without delay, is either neglected or deferred to some other time.

Take notice, moreover, that it is not sufficient to do instantly what is required, but the proper time of doing it must be observed, and great application employed to give it all the perfection it can receive. For it must not be called diligence, but an artful refined sloth, which acts precipitately, without any regard whether things are well or ill done, solicitous only to get rid of the trouble, and to enjoy ease again, as soon as possible. This disorder springs from not considering the great value of a good work, done in its due time and manner, wherein are surmounted all the obstacles which sloth opposes to those who begin to wage war against their vices.

Reflect frequently, therefore, that a single aspiration, an ejaculatory prayer, a genuflexion, the least mark of respect for the Divine Majesty, is of greater value than all the treasures of the earth; and that every time a person mortifies his inclinations, the angels present him a crown of glory in recompense for the victory gained over himself. On the contrary, God withdraws his graces by

degrees from the slothful, who neglect them, and heaps them on the fervent, who, by their means, as faithful servants, may one day enter into the joy of their Lord, Mat. xxv. 21.

But if at first you find your strength insufficient to undergo all the difficulties and troubles you are to encounter in your road to perfection, you must acquire the address of hiding them from yourself, that they may appear much less than the slothful are apt to imagine them to be. When, therefore, many repeated acts are requisite for acquiring some particular virtue, and this to be continued for several days in opposition to numberless powerful enemies ; begin with forming such acts as if a few would suffice, and your trouble would soon end ; attack your enemies singly, as if you had but one to encounter, and be assured, through God's grace, you will master them all. Thus the vice of sloth is shaken off, and the contrary virtue acquired.

Observe the same method with regard to prayer. If an hour is to be employed in prayer, and the time seems long, propose at first but half a quarter, that got over propose another, and thus the

hour will run away insensibly. But if, during this time, you feel a very great repugnance to prayer, don't render it absolutely disgusting; rather desist for a while, which will have no ill consequence, provided that soon after you return again to this holy exercise.

This likewise will hold good in laborious works. If you apprehend being overwhelmed with a multiplicity of business, or the difficulties attending it, and through indolence are dispirited, begin with what ought first to be done, without reflecting on the rest; use great application, for this being once well done, the others will follow with much less trouble than you imagined. Thus it is you must face difficulties, and never decline labour. For you have reason to fear lest sloth should gain so much upon you as to render insupportable even the first step towards virtue, and imprint a horror on your mind even before you have experienced the least difficulty.

For thus it happens to fearful dastardly souls. They are in continual dread of the enemy, though never so weak and remote from them: ever apprehensive of having more laid upon

them than they can bear, and from thence suffer, even when most at ease. Know then that in this vice there lurks a poison, which not only chokes the first seeds of virtue, but even destroys those that are already formed. Know, that what the worm does in wood, this effects in the spiritual life, employed too successfully by the Devil to draw man into snares, especially such as aspire to perfection.

Watch over yourself, and be addicted to prayer and good works; do not defer making your nuptial robe till you are called upon to go forth and meet the Heavenly Bridegroom. Every day reflect, that he whose goodness has preserved you till morning, has not promised the same favour till night; nor that being come, can you depend on seeing the following day. Let every day, therefore, be spent as if it was the last; have nothing at heart but the will of God, and ever dread that rigorous account he will demand of you for every single moment.

One word more. Though you have despatched much business, and taken a great deal of pains, yet look upon the day as lost to you, and all your labour

unprofitable, unless you have gained many victories over your passions and your own will; unless you have gratefully acknowledged the benefits received from God, particularly his dying on the Cross for you; unless you have received as blessings whatever chastisements that FATHER OF INFINITE MERCY has inflicted, as a means of expiating your manifold crimes.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of the proper use of our Senses, and how to make them subservient to the contemplation of Divine things.

THE greatest care and unwearied application is requisite for the right ordering of our senses; because the sensitive appetite, from whence all the motions of corrupt nature proceed, is doatingly fond of pleasure: and as it is incapable of satisfying itself, it employs the senses for attracting their several objects, whose images it transmits to the mind. Thus do sensual pleasures, by means of that union which subsists between the body and the soul, after spreading themselves through all the

senses capable of them, seize like a contagious infection on the spiritual faculties, and effect the corruption of the entire man.

The following remedies may be applied to so enormous an evil. Keep a strict watch over your senses ; never let them be employed except for some good end, some advantageous motive or real necessity, but never for the sake of pleasure. If ever they go astray by stealth as it were ; if they transgress the bounds which reason prescribes, instantly recall them, and regulate matters so, that instead of fixing upon vain objects for the sake of false delights, they may be accustomed to draw from the same objects great helps for the sanctifying and perfecting the soul ; that the soul by recollecting herself, may rise from the knowledge of earthly things, to the contemplation of the divine goodness ; this may be done in the following manner.

When an agreeable object presents itself to any of your senses, do not be taken with what is material in it, but contemplate it with the eye of the understanding, and if there be any thing in it which pleases the senses, remember that it is not from itself but from

God, whose invisible hand created and endowed it with all it has of good or beautiful. Then rejoice to think that this sovereign and independent Being is the sole author of all the charming qualities his creatures possess, containing them all in himself with infinite pre-eminence above the most excellent created beings.

When you contemplate any of the beautiful works of the creation, consider that of themselves they are nothing; soar in spirit to the great hand which produced them, place all your delight in him, saying, O my God! thou sole object of my wishes! how delightful is it to consider that the perfections of creatures are but a faint image of thy glory, who art the universal Source of all.

When you behold the verdure of trees or plants, the beauty of flowers, &c. remember that they live but in that Almighty wisdom who invisibly cherishes them; say to him, O living God! O sovereign Life! Thou delight of my soul! It is from thee, in thee, and through thee, that all live and flourish on the earth! At the sight of animals raise your mind and heart to him who gives them sensibility and motion, say with respect and

love : great God, who movest all things, thyself remaining immovable, how I rejoice when I consider thy eternal fixed duration, incapable of the least change.

When the beauty of mankind strikes your eye, immediately distinguish between what appears to the sight, and what is only visible to the mind ; fix there, remembering that all corporeal beauty flows from an invisible principle, the uncreated beauty of God. Say within yourself : see here an almost imperceptible drop issuing from an endless source, an immense ocean, from whence numberless perfections continually flow ! How my soul is ravished when I reflect on that eternal Beauty, the cause of all that is lovely here.

When you meet with a person endowed with wisdom, justice, affability, or any other virtue, in the like manner distinguish what he has of himself, from what he has received from Heaven, and then say, O God of all virtue, I cannot express my joy, when I consider that all which is good comes from thee, and that all the perfections of created beings are a mere nothing when compared with thine. I give thee numberless thanks for this and all the good bestowed on

my neighbour or myself. Pity my poverty, be mindful how much I stand in need of such virtues.

When you have performed a good action, reflect that God is the author of it, and you but his instrument; then raising your eyes to him, cry out, O sovereign Lord of the universe, it is with the greatest pleasure I know, that of myself I can do nothing, that thou art the first and principal Cause of all things.

When you taste any thing pleasant to your palate, consider that God alone is capable of giving it that relish so agreeable to you; place in him all your delight, and say within yourself, O my soul rejoice, that as without God there can be no solid content, so in him all happiness is found.

When you perceive any pleasant scent, beware of confining yourself to the pleasure arising from thence: mount in spirit to Heaven, and convinced that this comes from God, rejoice at it; and beg of him, that being the author of all sweetness, he will cause your soul, freed from all sensual pleasure, to elevate itself to him like a sweet perfume.

In fine, when you hear a concert of music, think of God, and say to him, O my God ! my heart is filled with delight when I contemplate thy divine perfections, whose melodious harmony is infinitely pleasing not only to thyself, but to angels, men, and all created beings.

CHAPTER XXII.

In what manner Sensible Things may help us to meditate on the Mysteries of our Saviour's Life and Passion.

I HAVE already shewn how we may rise from the considerations of sensible things, to the contemplation of God's greatness ; learn now to make the same things subservient to a lively remembrance of the sacred mysteries of the life and death of our Lord. Every object in the universe may conduce to this end.

Consider only, as we have already said, that God is the first cause of all things ; that he bestowed upon his creatures, the most sublime not excepted, their being, beauty, and all the perfections with which they are endowed.

After this, admire the infinite goodness of this Sovereign Master of the universe, who condescended to become man, and suffer an ignominious death for your salvation, permitting even his own creatures to conspire against him and nail him to the cross. But if you are desirous to enter into a detail of his labours and sufferings, every thing about you will remind you of them.

If, for example, you see weapons, scourges, cords, thorns, reeds, nails, hammers, you will readily call to mind the several instruments of his passion. A poor cottage may represent the stable and manger where he was born. The rain falling on the earth will remind you of the bloody sweat with which he watered the garden of Olivet: the stones are figures of the rocks split at his death. When you behold the sun or the earth, remember, when he expired, the earth trembled, and the sun grew dark. When you see water, think of that which flowed from his side, and so of a thousand other objects.

When you drink, call to mind the vinegar and gall, with which that amiable Saviour was regaled by his enemies. If you take too much satisfaction in per-

fumes, consider the stench of the dead carcasses with which he was saluted on Mount Calvary. In putting on your clothes, recollect that the Son of God clothed himself with our flesh, that we might be clothed with his Divinity. In putting off your clothes, think you see him stript and in the hands of his executioners, on the point of being scourged and nailed to a cross for your sake. When you hear any confused noise, represent to yourself the horrible cries of the enraged populace against their Lord; Take him off, take him off—crucify him, crucify him.

As often as the clock strikes, think how the sacred heart of Jesus beat in the garden, when seized with that mortal agony at the prospect of the cruel torments preparing for him; or think you hear the strokes of the hammer with which the soldiers nailed him to the cross. In fine, whatever you suffer yourself, or see others undergo, be assured it is far short of the pains both of the body and mind your Saviour underwent during his passion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Other means of employing to advantage the exterior Senses on different occasions.

HAVING already shewn in what manner the mind may be raised from earthly to Heavenly things, and contemplate the several mysteries of Jesus Christ; I shall proceed to point out other subjects of meditation, that persons of different tastes may here find wherewithal to satisfy their devotion; this will be of service not only to the weaker sort, but even to the more advanced, who do not all take the same method of attaining perfection, nor are equally capable of sublime contemplations. Nevertheless, be not apprehensive that the variety of methods will create any perplexity; let discretion be your guide—take the advice of a prudent Director—abandon yourself with great humility to what he prescribes, not only as to what I am now speaking of, but also to what I may say hereafter.

When, therefore, you behold any thing pleasing, and what is esteemed by the

world, be convinced that it is viler than the dirt under your feet—infininitely short of what Heaven promises, whither you ought continually to tend, despising every thing else.

When you look up to the sun, reflect that your soul, when adorned with the sanctifying grace, is incomparably more bright and beautiful than all the firmament together; but that destitute of it, she is fouler than Hell itself. In viewing the sky, soar in spirit to Heaven itself, and there dwell, where you are sure of reigning for all eternity, if you live in innocence and sanctity on earth.

When you hear the warbling of birds, think of Paradise, where the praises of God are sung without ceasing; beg, at the same time, that God would make you worthy to join with the blessed Spirits in singing his praises to all eternity.

If the beauty of creatures should charm you, imagine you see the Fiend, concealed under those bewitching appearances, endeavouring to sting you and destroy the life of your soul. Say to him, with a holy indignation—Begone, cursed Serpent, in vain do you hide yourself for my destruction. Then turn-

ing to God—Blessed be thy name, shall you say, who thus graciously discovers and prevents the snares of my enemy! —After this, retire into the wounds of your Saviour as an undoubted refuge; employ your mind on the inexpressible sufferings he underwent, to cleanse you from sin, and to imprint in your heart a detestation of sensual pleasures.

Another method of avoiding the force of the beauty of creatures, is to consider what a change death will certainly work in what now appears so charming. When you walk, consider every step as so much advanced towards your grave. The flight of a bird, or rapid stream of a river, are slow when compared with the swiftness of human life. A storm laying every thing waste, a peal of thunder shaking the earth, reminds us of the last day, and bids us bow the knee before our great Judge, adoring and beseeching him to assist us, that we may prepare betimes for appearing before him, without withering away through fear.

But if you desire to take advantage of an infinity of accidents, to which this life is subject, you may take the following method. If, for example, you should

suffer from heat, cold, or any other inconvenience ; if you are oppressed with grief or melancholy, consider the eternal decrees of Providence, which for your good has appointed this uneasiness, and knows how to proportion it to your strength. Thus with joy will you discern the paternal love and tenderness the Almighty bears towards you, which is evident in his giving you this opportunity of serving him in the manner most agreeable to him.

Seeing yourself therefore in a condition of pleasing him more than ever, say—Now is accomplished in me the will of Him, who, in compassion to me from all eternity, appointed I should this day undergo this mortification ! May He be for ever blessed ! When any good thought occurs, be firmly persuaded that it comes from God, and return thanks to the Father of all light. When you read any pious book, think it is the Holy Ghost who speaks to you, and who dictated the contents.

When you see a cross, look upon it as the standard of Jesus Christ your captain, and know that if you stray ever so little from him, you will fall into the hands of the most cruel enemies ; where-

as if you follow him you will be received, covered with the ensigns of victory, into the kingdom of Heaven.

When you behold an image of the Blessed Virgin, offer your heart to that Mother of mercy; rejoice with her on her having always accomplished with the greatest exactness the will of God; on her having brought forth the Saviour of the world and nourished him with her milk. In fine, thank her for the assistance she affords to all those who call upon her, in their struggles with the Enemy of mankind. All the images of the saints will remind you of those valiant soldiers of Christ, who fighting courageously till death, have marked out the road you must follow, if you will share in their glory.

When you hear the bell ring three times for the Angelical salutation, you may make a short reflection on the words which precede each Hail Mary. The first time, return God thanks for the solemn embassy He sent to Mary, which begun the great work of our redemption. The second, rejoice with Mary on the high dignity to which God raised her for her profound humility. At the third, adore the word now made

man, and then acknowledge the honour due to his Blessed Mother and the Archangel Gabriel. At each time it is proper to bow the head out of respect, but particularly at the third.

These acts may be exercised at any time. We shall assign others more peculiarly adapted to particular times of the day, morning, noon and night, but all regarding the mysteries of our Saviour's passion. We must not neglect frequently to call to mind the cruel martyrdom the Blessed Virgin underwent at that juncture; nothing but ingratitude itself can be forgetful of it.

At night consider the cruel affliction she felt from the bloody sweat, and the seizing of her son Jesus in the garden, and all the agonies of her mind during that night. In the morning condole with her for what she suffered, in seeing her beloved son dragged to Pilate and Herod, condemned to death, and loaded with a heavy cross to the place of execution. At noon contemplate the sword of grief which pierced the soul of this afflicted mother, when she saw him crucified, expiring, and his side opened with a lance.

These pious reflections on the grief of

the Blessed Virgin may be continued from Friday evening to Saturday noon—the preceding meditations may be made on other days. Nevertheless, consult your own devotion as you find yourself affected with exterior objects.

In fine, to set down in few words the best manner of governing the senses, regulate them so as never to suffer either love or hatred to enter your heart on human motives, but as the will of God directs your inclinations either to embrace or reject whatever objects present themselves to your mind.

But take notice, in regard of this variety of practices pointed out for the better regulating your senses, it is far from my design to have you entirely employed in them. On the contrary, you ought for the most part to keep yourself recollected and attached to God; your chief employment must be an interior combat against your vicious inclinations, and the forming acts of contrary virtues. All that I propose is, that you may use them on proper occasions. For it must not be imagined, that any great progress in devotion will be made by employing a great number of exercises, which, though commend-

able in themselves, yet by ill management may perhaps only serve to perplex the mind, increase self-love and unsteadiness, and consequently open a gate to the illusions of the Devil.

CHAPTER XXIV.

How we are to govern the Tongue.

THE tongue requires a strict guard over it, by reason of the propensity we have of discoursing of every thing agreeable to our senses. This is to be attributed to a certain pride, which inclines us to think ourselves more knowing than we really are; and, thus fond of our own conceptions, we utter them with great self-complacency, fancying we shine in conversation, and expect the whole company should be attentive to what we say.

It would be no easy task to number the evils arising from this detestable vice. In general, we may say it occasions much loss of time; is a certain sign of ignorance and folly, and is usually accompanied with calumny and lies;—that it cools the fervour of devotion, gives new strength to our disor-

derly passions, and accustoms the tongue to frivolous and idle discourse.

In order to correct it, I would advise as follows.

Never talk too much either to those who are little attentive to you, lest you tire them; or those who hear you with pleasure, lest you be insensibly led to say what is not proper.—Avoid talking loud or in a magisterial tone, both are ungrateful to the ear, and only betray much sufficiency and presumption.

Never discourse, of yourself, your kindred or what you have done, without an absolute necessity, and even then let it be in as few words as possible, and with great modesty.—If you meet with a person who is the subject of his own discourse, neither despise nor imitate him, though all he says should tend to discover his failings and cover him with confusion. Rarely speak of your neighbour or his affairs, unless an opportunity presents itself of saying something to his praise. Speak willingly of God and his immense charity for us: but lest you should not express yourself in a proper manner, rather listen to others on that subject, and treasure up what you hear.

As to what regards worldly discourse, if it reach your ears, at least let it not enter your heart. But if you are obliged to hear it, in order to give an answer, look up from time to time to Heaven, where reigns your God, and from whence that Divine Majesty condescends to behold even you, unworthy as you are. Weigh well what you intend to say, before it reaches your lips. Be very circumspect, for you will always find a great superfluity; and even when you have determined what to say, still retrench something of it, since in the end you will always perceive you have said too much.

Silence is of infinite service in the spiritual warfare; and they who observe it, may be assured of the victory. For generally speaking, it is accompanied with a diffidence of themselves and a confidence in God, a greater relish for prayer, and facility in virtuous exercises.

In order to engage you with a love of silence, consider the great advantages arising from it, and the numberless evils which spring from the contrary vice. Nay more: if you desire to accustom yourself to few words, hold your peace

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even when you may be allowed to speak; provided your silence be not prejudicial to yourself or others. Be sure to avoid all unprofitable discourse; prefer the company of God, his saints and angels, to that of men. In fine, if you are always mindful of the war you have undertaken, you will scarce find time to breathe, much less to throw away in frivolous and vain conversation.

CHAPTER XXV.

That the Soldier of Jesus Christ, who has resolved to engage and conquer his Enemies, must avoid, as much as possible, whatever may disturb his peace of mind.

WHENEVER we have lost our peace of mind, omit nothing that can contribute to the recovery of it; though let what will happen, we can never lose it, nor have it disturbed but through our own fault. It is true, we are to be sorry for our sins, but this sorrow ought to be calm and moderate, as I have often said. We ought to compassionate all

sinners, and interiorly lament their destruction; but still this compassion must be void of all vexation and trouble, as it springs from a motive of pure charity.

Even that infinity of evils, to which this life is subject, as sickness, wounds, death—the loss of friends and kindred—plagues, war, and fire, and the like, which men dread as contrary to their nature, ever averse to suffering; all these, I say, by the assistance of the Divine grace, may not only be received with submission from the hand of God, but even become subjects of joy, if we consider them as wholesome punishments inflicted on sinners, or opportunities given the just of laying up a treasure of merits.

For on both these considerations the Almighty delights in afflicting us; but this is certain, that as long as our minds are resigned to his will, the severest trials can never disturb our peace. Besides, all vexation is highly displeasing to him; because whatever nature it is of, it is always sinful, as arising from a bad principle, the love of ourselves. Endeavour, therefore, to foresee any uneasiness that may happen, and provide with patience for its reception. Consi-

der that the evils of this life, how frightful soever they may appear, are only imaginary, as they cannot deprive us of real good ; that God ordains or permits them for the reasons alleged as above, or for others, which, though hidden from us, are truly equitable.

Thus preserving an even mind in all occurrences of life, your advantages will be very great, but without it your pious exercises will come to nothing : not to mention how much you will be exposed by anxiety to the insults of your enemy, without being able to discern the sure and ready path to virtue ; the Devil is ever solicitous to banish peace from your mind, knowing well that God only dwells there in peace, and that it is in peace that he works his wonders. Hence it is that Satan employs all his cunning for destroying it ; even in order to surprise us, he does not hesitate to inspire seemingly good designs, but which are otherwise in effect, as is easily discovered, but particularly by their disturbing our inward peace.

To remedy so dangerous an evil, when the enemy endeavours to put us upon some new design, let us beware of giving it entrance too hastily into our

hearts : First, let us renounce all affection arising from self-love, then offer the design to God, begging with great earnestness, that he will manifest to us whether it comes from him or our enemy, and, in order to it, our director ought to be consulted. Even when we are assured that such a design is the motion of the Holy Ghost, we ought to defer the execution of it till we have mortified our too great eagerness in executing it. For a good work, preceded by such a mortification, is much more pleasing to God, than when accompanied with too solicitous an ardour ; and oftentimes the merit of the work, falls short of that of the mortification. Thus rejecting all pernicious motions, and not executing even the good ones till we have suppressed the effects of self-love, we shall preserve a perfect tranquillity of mind.

It is moreover requisite to condemn a certain interior regret, which, though seemingly coming from God, as being a remorse of conscience for past faults, yet is doubtless the work of the Devil, as the following test will clearly discover. If the regret tends to our greater humiliation, if it increases our fervour

in performing good works and our confidence in the Divine mercy, we ought to receive it with great thankfulness as a gift from Heaven. But if it occasions anxiety—if it renders us dispirited, slothful, timorous and backward in our duty, we may certainly conclude that it proceeds from the suggestions of the enemy, and ought to pass it over without the least regard.

Besides this, as it frequently happens that our vexations arise from the evils of this life, there are two things to be done as preservatives against it. The first is, to consider what will be the consequence of such evils, whether they will destroy in us the desire of attaining perfection, or self-love; if they only tend to diminish self-love, one of our greatest enemies, we ought not to complain; rather let us receive them with joy and thanksgiving, as so many favours which God bestows upon us. But if they incline us to swerve from the path of perfection, and make virtue distasteful, we must not be cast down and lose our tranquillity of mind as we shall see hereafter.

The second is, to raise our hearts to God, and receive without exception

whatever he ordains, fully persuaded that every cross he is pleased to inflict, will certainly prove an endless source of blessings, if we, for want of knowing better, do not neglect to improve it to the best advantage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

What we are to do on receiving any hurt in the Spiritual Combat.

WHEN you perceive yourself wounded, that is, fallen into any sin, whether through frailty, or deliberately through malice, be not too much cast down; do not abandon yourself to grief and immoderate vexation; but, addressing yourself to God, say with a great but humble confidence—I am now convinced, O my God, that I am nothing—for what can be expected from so blind and wretched a creature as I am, but sin and folly? Dwell on this thought in order to your greater confusion, and a lively sorrow for your fault.

Then with great calmness shew your displeasure against those passions which reign most in your breast, especially that which occasioned your misfortune.

Lord, shall you say, what might I not have done, had not your infinite goodness come to my assistance.

Then return millions of thanks to that Father of mercies, who far from resenting the affront you have given, stretches forth his hand, lest you fall into the same disorder again.

In fine, full of confidence in him, say, manifest, O my God, what thou art: let an humble penitent partake of thy infinite mercy; forget my offences; suffer me not to wander from thee; strengthen me with thy holy grace, that I may never more offend thee.

This done, do not perplex yourself with examining whether God has pardoned you or not. This is a needless trouble and a loss of time, proceeding from pride and the illusion of the Devil, who under such specious pretexts seeks to molest you. Rather abandon yourself to the Divine mercy, and pursue your usual exercises with as much tranquillity as if you had not committed any fault. Though you should fall several times in a day, yet lose not a just confidence in him. Observe the method I have set down after a second or third, after the last relapse: conceiving every time a

greater contempt of yourself, a greater abhorrence of sin, and put yourself more on your guard than ever. This will greatly perplex your enemy, because it is very pleasing to God; the Devil will gain nothing but confusion, finding himself baffled by one he has so often overcome. And consequently he will use his utmost endeavours to induce you to change your method; and in this he frequently succeeds, where persons do not keep a strict watch over the motions of their heart.

And the greater difficulty you meet with in this, the greater efforts you must use in conquering yourself. Be not satisfied with once doing it, but repeat this holy exercise frequently, though but one fault was committed. If, therefore, in such a case you feel great vexation, and your courage sinks, you must first endeavour to recover your peace of mind and confidence in God. Then raise your heart to Heaven, and be persuaded that the trouble which sometimes follows the commission of a fault, is not so much a sorrow for having offended God, but a dread of punishment, which is more apprehended than any thing else.

The means of recovering this peace, so desirable and absolutely necessary, is to think no more on the fault, but to contemplate the immense goodness of God, who is ever ready, and even desires to pardon the most enormous sinners, and leaves nothing undone to bring them back to their duty, to unite them entirely to himself, to sanctify them in this life, and make them eternally happy in the next. When these, and the like considerations, have restored your tranquillity, then weigh the heinousness of your fault according to the method prescribed above.

In fine, when you approach the sacrament of penance, which I would advise to be done often, call to mind all your sins, and declare them sincerely to your spiritual Father, renewing your grief for having committed them, and your purpose of doing so no more for the future.

CHAPTER XXVII.

In what manner the Devil tempts and seduces those who are willing to embrace virtue, or are still plunged in vice.

IT is certain the Devil is continually seeking the destruction of mankind, and has various ways of working his ends. In order, therefore, to let you see some of his stratagems, we will consider different sorts of persons in different dispositions. Some, overwhelmed with iniquity, think not of breaking their chains; others are willing to free themselves from their thralldom, but do nothing towards it; others again think themselves in a good way, but by that means are very far from it; others, in fine, after attaining a high degree of virtue, fall into a more dangerous condition than before. In the following chapters we shall consider these several sorts of persons.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The artifices employed by the Devil to complete the perdition of those he has drawn into sin.

WHEN the Devil has entangled a soul in sin, all his artifices are employed to take off her thoughts from every thing capable of discovering to her the horrible state in which she is engaged. Not content with stifling all inspirations from Heaven, and suggesting of wicked thoughts in their room, he endeavours to plunge her, by furnishing her with dangerous opportunities, into fresh crimes, either of the same or a more enormous nature. Hence it is, that deprived of the light of Heaven, she heaps sins on sins, and hardens herself in iniquity.—Thus she wallows in the mire, and rushes from darkness to darkness, from one abyss to another, always flying further from the way of salvation, and multiplying relapse upon relapse, unless supported by an extraordinary grace from Heaven. The most efficacious remedy against this evil, is to receive without the least re-

sistance the divine inspirations, which will recall her from darkness to light, from vice to virtue; let her cry out with great fervour, Lord assist me! Haste to my relief! Suffer me not to remain any longer in the shades of sin and death! These, and the like ejaculations, must be often repeated, and if it can be done, let her have immediate recourse to her director for his advice against the assaults of the enemy. If this is not feasible, let her prostrate herself before a crucifix. Let her invoke the Queen of Heaven, and implore her compassion and assistance. For she may be assured, that the victory entirely depends on exerting herself with great diligence, as we shall see in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The inventions of the Devil to prevent the entire Conversion of such, as, convinced of the bad state of their conscience, have some thoughts of amending their lives. How it happens that their good designs are frequently ineffectual.

THOSE who are sensible of the wretched state of their souls, and are

willing to put a stop to it, are often deluded by the Devil, who endeavours to persuade them they have a long time to live, and consequently may safely defer their conversion. He represents to them that such an affair or lawsuit must first be ended, such a business finished, before they can sufficiently extricate themselves, in order to follow a life of devotion, and peaceably perform the several exercises of it.

This snare has and does daily entangle many. But they may all justly attribute its success to their own supine negligence in an affair wherein the glory of God and their own salvation ought only to be considered. Let all such, instead of saying to-morrow, to-morrow, cry out now, now. And why to-morrow? How can I be sure of living till it comes? Even were I sure of it, would it look like saving my soul if I deferred my repentance? Would it look like aiming at victory, if I exposed myself to fresh wounds?

It is, therefore, past all dispute, that a ready compliance with the inspirations of Heaven, is the only means of escaping this illusion, as well as that mentioned in the preceding chapter. When

I say ready compliance, I would not be understood to mean mere desires, or feeble and barren resolutions, by which so many are deceived, for the following reasons : first, such desires and resolutions have not for their foundation a diffidence of ourselves and a confidence in God ; the consequence of which is, that a soul puffed up with a secret pride, is so blind as to take that for solid virtue which is only so in appearance. The remedy for this evil, and the light requisite for discovering it, must be obtained from Heaven, which suffers us to fall, that our eyes being opened by woful experience, we may remove the confidence we had in ourselves, placing it in the Divine Grace, and exchange an almost imperceptible pride, for an humble knowledge of our own weakness. Thus good resolutions will never be effectual, unless firm and steady ; neither can they be firm and steady, unless founded in a diffidence of ourselves and a confidence in God.

The second reason is, that when we conceive some good purpose, we only fix our eyes on the charms and excellence of virtue, which draw to it even the most feeble minds, but never consi-

der the difficulties of attaining it ; whence it comes that cowardly minds are dashed at the first appearance of trouble, and fly off from their enterprise. Upon this account, you ought rather to place before your eyes the difficulties which occur in the acquisition of virtues, than the virtues themselves ; think often of it, and prepare yourself accordingly. Know, moreover, that the greater courage you shew in conquering yourself or defeating your enemies, the sooner will the difficulties diminish, and by degrees entirely vanish.

The third reason is, the too great regard we have to our own private advantage, preferably to virtue and the will of God ; this frequently happens when soothed with consolations in time of affliction. For finding ourselves destitute of all earthly comfort, we take up a resolution of attaching ourselves to God and his service. That we may be blameless on this head, let us beware of misusing the favours of heaven : let us be humble and circumspect in forming good resolutions : let us guard against all indiscreet fervour, which may rashly engage us in making vows beyond our abilities.

If we groan under affliction, let us barely propose to carry our cross as we ought, it coming from God, placing all our glory therein, without seeking any alleviation from earth, or even Heaven itself. Let us ask, let us wish for no more, but that the Almighty may vouchsafe to support us under the trial, and that we may patiently undergo whatever he is pleased to inflict.

CHAPTER XXX.

Of the mistake of several who think themselves in the way to Perfection.

THE enemy being defeated in his first and second attack, will not fail of renewing it a third time. He endeavours to make us forget the vices and passions we actually labour under, and fills our imagination with vain projects of achimerical perfection, to which he knows we shall never reach. By this contrivance we receive frequent and dangerous wounds, without ever thinking how to remedy them. For such imaginary desires and resolutions pass upon us for real effects, and through a secret pride, we value ourselves as great saints.

Thus, at the very time when the least contradiction or affront is insupportable, we amuse ourselves with imagining we are ready to suffer the greatest torments, even the pains of Purgatory, for the love of God.

The deceit lies in this, that our sensitive part, nothing affected with sufferings at a distance, boldly compares itself with those who actually bear the greatest pains with an unwearied patience. To avoid so dangerous a snare, we must resolve to fight, and actually engage those numerous enemies we have at hand. This will quickly discover whether our resolutions are cowardly or courageous, imaginary or real : and thus we shall advance to perfection through the road the saints have marked out.

As to those enemies who rarely molest us, we need not give ourselves much trouble about them, unless we have reason at some particular time to expect an attack from them. In such a case we must prepare for their reception by a firm resolution to conquer. But however strenuous our resolutions may be, let us beware of counting upon them as so many victories ; even though we should have for some time practised acts

of virtue, and made a considerable progress therein. Let humility ever accompany us; let our weakness be always before our eyes, and our confidence placed in God alone; let us frequently beseech him to strengthen us during the fight, and shield us from all danger; to banish in particular from our breasts all presumption and confidence in our own abilities. In this manner we may aspire to the most sublime perfection; though we may possibly find great difficulty in surmounting some frailties which God is pleased to leave us in order to humble us, that we may not lose the little merit already acquired by our good works.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The artifices employed by the Devil, to make us forsake the path of Virtue.

THE fourth artifice, which, as I have said, the Devil employs to impose on those who are advancing in the way to perfection, is to put them upon ill-timed designs, though otherwise commendable, to the end that desisting from such exercises of virtue as are requisite, he

may engage them insensibly in vicious habits.

For example : a sick person bears his illness with great resignation ; the enemy, dreading lest he acquire an habitual patience, puts in his head many pious works he might perform if in health ; he persuades the sick man, that then he would not fail to do great service to God, his neighbour and his own soul : when the fiend has gained so far as to make him desirous of health, he contrives to make him uneasy under the disappointment, and the more earnest the wishes, the greater the solicitude. The enemy does not stop here, but urges him to great impatience in his sickness, which is represented as an obstacle to those chimerical designs the sick man passionately affects as the more acceptable to God.

This point being gained, the good designs are effaced by degrees, and nothing left but a criminal solicitude to be freed from sickness, which is soon attended with all the evils arising from vexation and impatience. And thus instead of the practice of an habitual virtue, the very opposite vice takes place.

The means of preventing this illusion, is to beware of forming any pious designs, incompatible with the state of suffering with which you are visited; for, incapable as you are of executing them, the only consequence will be anxiety and vexation. Be persuaded with great humility and resignation, that when God shall please to lift you up again, all these good desires, which you now form, very likely may prove ineffectual for want of courage to put them in execution.

At least, imagine that God, by a secret disposition of Providence, or in punishment of past offences, denies you the satisfaction of performing such a good work, and chooses to behold you resigned to his will, and humbled under his all-powerful hand.

Behave in the same manner, when, either by the direction of your Ghostly Father, or for some other reason, you are obliged to refrain for a time from the holy communion. Be not cast down by uneasiness, but renounce your own will and conform yourself to that of Heaven, saying—did not God, the searcher of hearts, see in me some failing or ingratitude, I should not be thus

deprived from approaching him. Let his name be ever blessed who thus discovers to me my unworthiness. I am fully persuaded, O Lord, that in all the trials thou art pleased to appoint, thou requirest nothing of me but that bearing them with patience and a desire of pleasing thee, I may offer to thee a heart ever conformable to thy will; that taking up thy habitation there, it may be replenished with divine consolations, and secured against the power of Hell, which would ravish it from thee. O my Creator and Redeemer, dispose of me as to thee seemeth good! May thy divine will be now and evermore my strength and support! All I demand is, that my soul being cleansed from every thing displeasing to thee, and adorned with all virtues, may be in a condition not only to receive thee, but to comply with whatever thou art pleased to appoint.

Those who carefully put in practice what is here set down, may be assured, that though they should be moved to undertake some work of piety beyond their abilities, whether such a motion be purely natural, at the instigation of the Devil to make virtue distasteful to them, or be inspired from Heaven for a trial

of their obedience; they may be assured, I say, that it will prove a means of advancing in the way of salvation and of serving God in the most acceptable manner, wherein alone true devotion consists.

Observe, moreover, that when you employ any means, lawful in themselves and such as the saints used, to remove an infirmity or any other troublesome inconvenience, beware of being too eager or solicitous for the success. Entirely resigned, propose nothing to yourself but the holy will of God. For how can you tell whether by these or more powerful means he designs to free you from your troubles? If you act otherwise, you alone will be the sufferer; for perhaps you may not be indulged in what you so passionately desire, from whence nothing but impatience will follow; or if you guard against it, still your patience will be sullied with many imperfections, and consequently less agreeable and less meritorious in the sight of God.

There is a secret artifice of self-love, I must not omit, which on many occasions disguises our failings, though in themselves considerable and remarka-

ble enough. A sick person, for example, who takes his illness much to heart, would have it believed that his impatience springs from a justifiable cause. It is not according to him, properly impatience, but a commendable regret for his faults, of which this sickness is the punishment, or an uneasiness for the trouble it occasions to those about him. The ambitious man who laments his not obtaining such or such an employment, behaves in the same manner. He would make you believe his repining is not to be attributed to vanity, but to other commendable motives, which he knows very well would have very little influence on him on other occasions. Just so the sick man, who pretends so much uneasiness on account of those who tend him, is no sooner well but he is utterly unconcerned at what they suffer in tending others.

This is a demonstration that his impatience is not owing to the sufferings of others, but to a secret horror of having his own inclinations thwarted. Whoever desires to avoid these rocks, must resolve to suffer patiently, as we have said before, all the crosses inflicted on him in this life, from whatever quarter they come.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The last Artifice of the Devil, to make even the practice of Virtue become occasions of Sin.

THE Old Serpent takes opportunities of tempting us even by the means of virtue itself. He inspires us with esteem and complacency for ourselves, and lifts us up to that pitch that we cannot escape the snares of vain glory. Therefore fight without ceasing, and fortify yourself with the knowledge of your own nothingness; be ever mindful that of yourself you are nothing, know nothing, can do nothing; that you are full of sin and misery, and deserve nothing but eternal perdition. Let this important truth be always before your eyes—let it be a kind of intrenchment which you must never quit, and if any thoughts of vanity and presumption arise, repel them as the most dangerous enemies who have vowed your destruction.

But if you desire to attain a perfect knowledge of yourself, take the following method. As often as you look upon yourself or your actions, carefully dis-

tinguish between what is your own from what is owing to God and his holy grace, and then let the esteem you have for yourself rest upon what is really yours. If you consider what passed before you came into the world you will find that from all eternity you were just nothing, utterly incapable of doing the least thing to deserve a being. If you consider this life, which you only hold through God's infinite mercy, what would you be without his support, what but a mere nothing? And would you not return every instant to what his Omnipotence drew you from, unless continually preserved by him?

This, therefore, is unquestionable, that what is properly your own, deserves not your esteem, and much less that of others. If considered in a state of Grace, and the performance of good works, still you have no reason to value yourself: For, without the assistance of Heaven, where would be your merit, what good could you perform?

If, after this, you consider the frightful multitude of sins you either have committed or might have committed, had not God preserved you from them, you will find by reckoning up, not only

the years and days, but the crimes and vicious habits—you will find, I say, that as one vice draws on another, your iniquities might have been innumerable, and your guilt equal to that of devils. These considerations ought daily to increase your contempt of yourself, and gratitude for so many obligations to the divine goodness, instead of assuming to yourself the glory due to it.

But, remember that whatever sentence you pass upon yourself, let it be strictly conformable to truth, and that vain glory does not creep in. For though you are more sensible of your own misery than a man blinded by self-love, yet you will be much more criminal and deserve a severer punishment than he, if, with such a knowledge, you are desirous of passing upon the world for a saint.

In order therefore that this knowledge may secure you against vain glory, and render you pleasing to Him who is the father and pattern of the humble; it is not sufficient to have a mean opinion of yourself, even so as to think yourself unworthy of all good and only deserving of evil; but you must be willing to be despised by others—you

must dread hearing yourself praised—receive contempt with joy, and take all opportunities of debasing yourself. Set at nought what the world will say of you when busied in the most servile good works. Only be careful on these occasions that your real motive be humility, and not the effects of pride and a stubborn haughtiness, which, under the appearance of a Christian courage, despises the discourse of worldlings, and contemns their judgments.

If any one should shew an esteem and affection for you, or commend any qualifications you may have received from above, recollect yourself immediately, and on the principles of truth and justice we have just now established, say in your heart with all sincerity—Suffer me not, O Lord, to rob thee of thy glory, by attributing to myself what is entirely owing to thy Holy Grace! To thee be the honour and praise, let shame and confusion be my portion! In regard of the person who praises you, say from the bottom of your heart—What motive can he have for praising me? What perfection or good can he discern here? God alone is good, and only his works praiseworthy. Humble

yourself in this manner, and give to God what is God's. This will preserve your heart from vanity, and you will merit greater grace every day than before.

If the remembrance of any good performed, occasions a vain complacency in yourself, stifle it instantly, by reflecting that those good works came from God, not from you, and say with great humility, as if speaking to them—I know not what gave birth to you in my heart, or how any thing commendable could spring from such an abyss of sin and corruption. God, not I, must have produced you and brought you to perfection. Him I ought to acknowledge as the author; it is Him I will and ought to thank; to Him I refer all the praise so unjustly bestowed upon me.

Consider in the next place, that in all the pious works you may have performed, so far from having exactly corresponded with the abundance of grace and light with which God then favoured you, that even many deficiencies accompanied them; a purity of intention, a proper fervour, a due diligence in the execution was wanting. Thus, upon a strict scrutiny, instead of vain glory, confusion must be the consequence,

since so little advantage, or rather such a bad use has been made of so much grace.

If, after this, you compare your actions with those of the saints, you will blush at the difference. But if you proceed to compare them with what the Son of God performed, whose whole life was one perpetual cross, abstracting from the infinite Dignity of his person, and only considering the greatness of his sufferings and the purity of his love in undergoing them, you will be constrained to avow you have neither done nor suffered any thing in comparison with Him.

In fine, if you lift up your eyes to Heaven, and there contemplate the majesty of God, to whom infinite services are due, you will be convinced that all your good deeds ought rather to be a subject of fear than vanity. Whatever pious work you do, always say with a profound humility—Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Luke xviii. 13.

Be not subject to publish the favours you have received from God. This is generally displeasing to him, as he was pleased to declare in the following manner. Appearing one day to a great saint

under the form of an infant, she asked him to recite the Hail Mary, which he immediately complied with, but stopped when he had repeated those words, Blessed art thou amongst women, unwilling to add what was in his own praise. Being pressed to finish what he had begun, he disappeared, leaving the devout soul replenished with consolation, and more than ever convinced of the importance of humility, by the example He was pleased to give.

Learn moreover to humble yourself in all your actions, as they are lively representations of your own nothing. On this are grounded the several virtues. As God in the beginning created the first parents out of nothing, so He continues to build all spiritual edifices on this confessed truth, that of ourselves we are nothing. Consequently, the more we humble ourselves the higher the building rises; and in proportion as we sink and reach the depth of our nothingness; the sovereign Architect lays the solid stones employed in rearing the structure. Imprint deep, therefore, on your mind, that you can never descend so low, and that if there is any thing infinite in a created being, it must

// be his weakness and wretchedness. O Heavenly knowledge, which makes us happy here and glorious hereafter! O admirable Light, piercing through the darkness of this nothing, in order to enlighten our souls and raise our minds to God! O precious but unknown Jewel! which shineth through the filth of our sins! O Nothing, the contemplation of which puts all things in our power!

This is a subject I could treat of without ever finishing. Whoever desires to honour the Divine Majesty must despise himself, and wish the same treatment from others. •Humble yourself before every one—lay yourself at the feet of the world, if you are willing that God should be glorified in you and you in him. In order to unite yourself to him, fly all grandeur; for he flies from all those who extol themselves; choose always the lowest place, and he will descend from his throne to embrace you with the greater love, the more you are fond of humiliations, and of being trampled under foot as the least deserving of all mankind.

If no less than God, who to promote a closer union with you, became the last of men, inspires you with such

humble sentiments, be sure you frequently return him due thanks. Thank likewise all who contribute to preserve them by their ill usage to you, or imagine you incapable of bearing patiently an affront—thank, I say, all such, and let nothing prevail on you to complain against them.

But if, notwithstanding all those powerful considerations, through the malice of the Devil, a want of knowledge of yourself, or an evil propensity puts thoughts of vanity into your mind, and desires of placing yourself above others, humble yourself the more for this, as it shews the little progress you have made, and the great difficulty of overcoming such troublesome suggestions, a fatal proof of a great innate pride. This conduct will change the poison into an antidote, the evil into its proper remedy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Important instructions for such as mortify their passions, and the virtues requisite for them.

ALTHOUGH I have been very copious in setting out the method of subdu-

ing your passions and acquiring the necessary virtues, yet there still remains several instructions to be given of equal importance to what has been said.

1. If you desire to attain solid virtue, and an entire command over yourself, do not, for example, divide your exercises of different virtues, so as to assign them to particular days, and thus live in a perpetual vicissitude. The method you ought to observe, is to apply yourself to the rooting out the most predominant passion, and which presses most upon you at present; labouring at the same time with great earnestness to acquire in an eminent degree the contrary virtue. For being once possessed of so essential a virtue, the rest may be attained with little difficulty, as but few acts will be requisite for that end. And indeed the connexion of one virtue with another is so firmly cemented, that whoever entirely possesses one, possesses all.

2. Never set a precise time for acquiring any one virtue: never say so many days, weeks, years shall be employed in it; but like a fresh and vigorous soldier who never saw the enemy fight without ceasing, till by a complete

victory you open the way to perfection; every moment advance in the road to Heaven, for whoever makes any stop, so far from resting and taking breath, is sure to lose both ground and courage. When I advise you to advance continually, I mean that you must never imagine yourself arrived at the height of perfection; that you never omit any opportunity of exercising new acts of virtue, and preserve a horror of sin even in the highest degree.

In order to this you must acquit yourself of every duty incumbent on you with the greatest fervour and exactness, and on all occasions inure yourself to a perfect practice of every virtue. Embrace therefore with great affection every opportunity of advancing towards perfection and sanctity, especially such as are attended with any difficulty; for every effort of that nature is of singular efficacy for forming in a short time, virtuous habits in the soul. Love those who furnish you with such opportunities, avoiding only, with the greater caution, whatever may be in the least prejudicial to chastity.

3. Use great moderation and prudence in the practice of certain virtues,

whereby your health may receive any detriment, such as severe discipline, hair-shirts, fasting, watching, long meditations, and the like indiscreet penitential works. For the practice of exterior virtues must not be pursued too eagerly, but step by step. Whereas all interior virtues, such as the love of God, a hatred of the world, a contempt of one's self, a sorrow for sin, mildness and patience, charity for our enemies, as they know no bounds, so no precaution is necessary in their regard, and every act of them ought to be practised in the most eminent degree possible.

4. Let the scope of all your designs and endeavours be the demolition of that passion with which you are engaged, regarding such a victory as of the greatest consequence to you and the most acceptable to God. Whether you eat or fast, whether employed or unemployed, at home or abroad, whether contemplative or active life take up your time, still let your aim be the conquest of that predominant passion, and the acquisition of the contrary virtue.

5. Let the conveniences and pleasures of life in general be the objects of your aversion, and the attacks of vice

will be much enfeebled—all their force being drawn from the love of pleasures. But if you indulge yourself in one sensual satisfaction, while you shun another—if you make war only against one vice, be assured that though the wounds you receive may not always be attended with the greatest danger, yet the encounter will be very sharp, and the victory very doubtful. Have, therefore, continually before your eyes the words of the Holy Scripture. He that loveth his life shall lose it: And he that hateth his life in this world, doth keep it to everlasting life. John xii. 25. Brethren we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die: But if by the Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live, Rom. viii. 12.

6. I shall conclude with advising what is of infinite service, if not absolutely necessary, a general confession with the requisite dispositions, in order to secure a perfect reconciliation with God, the source of all graces, the giver of victories, and dispenser of crowns.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

That virtues are not to be acquired but by degrees, and one after another.

ALTHOUGH a true servant of Jesus Christ, who aspires to the summit of perfection, ought to set no bounds to his spiritual advancement; nevertheless prudence must restrain all excesses of an inconsiderate fervour, to which, though every thing seems feasible at first, yet it is too apt to cool and be entirely extinguished. Wherefore it must be observed, that besides the methods we have laid down with respect to exterior exercises, even interior virtues are not acquired but by degrees. Thus it is we are to lay the foundations of a solid and lasting piety, and in a little time may expect to make a considerable progress.

For example. In acquiring patience, you must not think at first setting out, to wish for crosses and to delight in them, but content yourself with the lowest degrees of this great virtue. Upon the same principle, do not grasp at all sorts of virtues, nor even many at

the same time; but pitch first upon one, then another, if you desire such habits should easily take deep root in your soul. For in undertaking any one particular virtue, and constantly applying your thoughts that way, your memory will be more exercised in it; your understanding, enlightened by the divine assistance, will discover new means and stronger motives for attaining it, and your will carried on with greater ardour in the pursuit; all which cannot be expected when these three faculties are divided by different objects. Besides, the acts requisite for forming a habit of such a virtue, all tending to the same end, and mutually assisting each other, will be attended with much less difficulty, and the latter of them will make the deeper impression on your heart, by means of the pious dispositions the former have left.

These reasons will still carry the greater force with you, if you reflect that whoever strenuously engages in the pursuit of any one virtue, is insensibly advanced in the practice of the rest, and that the attaining of one in an eminent degree, must necessarily introduce a great perfection in the others, they be-

ing like the rays of the sun, almost inseparably united.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The most profitable means of acquiring Virtues—in what manner we are to apply ourselves to any one Virtue for a time.

TO what has been already said I must subjoin, that in order to attain solid piety, great courage and a will not to be shaken, are absolutely requisite where so many contradictions and difficulties are to be encountered.—Besides a particular relish for virtue is likewise necessary, which arises from frequently reflecting how pleasing virtue is to God, how amiable in itself, how important to man, and that in it all Christian perfection begins and ends. It will be of great moment to purpose every morning a strict compliance with its dictates, in all the occurrences of the day; and frequently to examine how such resolutions have been put in practice, and to form such as may be more prevalent than the first.

What is here set down regards more

especially that particular virtue which is the object of our immediate pursuit, and of which we stand most in need. To this virtue must be referred all reflections drawn from the examples of the Saints, our meditations on the life and death of our Saviour, which will be of infinite service in this spiritual warfare. Let us inure ourselves in such a manner to the practice of virtues, whether interior or exterior, that we may find the same ease and satisfaction in it as in following heretofore the bent of our corrupt nature; the acts most contrary to which as we said before, are the most conducive to the establishing habitual virtue in our soul.

Select sentences out of the holy Scripture, and pronounced with due attention, or revolved in the mind, are likewise of great efficacy. Consequently we ought to be provided with such as have any relation to the virtue in question, and employ them frequently in the day, particularly when pressed by the predominant opposite passion. Such as labour to attain mildness and patience, may repeat these or the like passages. Bear patiently the wrath of God, which comes upon you in punishment of your

sins. Baruch iv. 25.—The patience of the poor shall not perish, or be deprived of its reward. Psalms ix. 19.—Better is the patient than the strong man : and he that ruleth his mind, than the overthrower of cities. Prov. xvi. 32.—In your patience you shall possess your Souls. Luke xxi. 19.—By patience let us run to the fight proposed unto us. Heb. xii. 1.

These, or such like aspirations may also be used. O my God, when shall I be armed with patience like a shield, proof against the weapons of my enemy? when shall I so love thee, as to receive with joy, all the afflictions thou shalt be pleased to appoint? O life of my soul, shall I never begin to live for thy glory alone, perfectly resigned to all sufferings? O how happy should I be, if in the fiery trial of tribulation, I burn with a desire of being consumed for thy service.

Let such prayers be frequently offered up, as our devotion suggests and our progress in virtue requires. They are called ejaculations, being like darts of fire directed to Heaven, lifting our hearts thither, and piercing to the Divine Goodness, when accompanied with two

qualities for their wings : the one, a firm persuasion of the delight God takes in seeing us labouring in the practice of virtue, the other a vehement desire of excelling in all virtue, on the sole motive of pleasing him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

That the practice of Virtue requires continual application.

OF all things which contribute to the acquiring of Christian Virtues, the scope of our present design, an earnest desire of advancing continually is of the greatest moment, since the least stop throws us back. The moment we cease from forming acts of virtue, our inclinations, naturally prone to ease and pleasures of the senses, raise in us disordered appetites, which overthrow, or at least much weaken our virtuous habits. To say nothing of the loss of many graces through such neglect, which we might have merited by a steady application to our spiritual advancement.

Such is the difference of a journey on earth, and that which tends to Heaven. In the former we may frequently stop,

without going back, and rest is moreover necessary to enable us to hold out to the journey's end; but in the latter, which leads to perfection, the more we advance, the more our strength increases: the reason is, the inferior appetites which throw all possible obstacles in our way to Heaven, grow weaker and weaker as we advance; and on the contrary, our good inclinations, the seat of virtue, acquire new strength.

• Thus as we advance in piety, the difficulties which at first occurred, continually diminish, and a certain delight, with which God is pleased to sweeten the bitterness of this life, increases in proportion. So that going cheerfully on from virtue to virtue, we reach at last the mountain's top, the height of perfection, that happy state, wherein the soul begins to practice virtue, not only without disgust, but with unspeakable pleasure; because, triumphant as she is over her passions, the world and herself, she lives in God, and through Him, amidst her continual labours, enjoys an undisturbed tranquillity.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

That since we must exercise ourselves in Virtue without ceasing, all opportunities of practising it ought to be embraced.

WE have already shewn, that in the way to perfection, we must continually advance without making the least stop. Watch, therefore, over yourself, that no opportunity of acquiring any virtue be ever neglected. Be careful never to avoid, as many do, what is contrary to the vitiated affections of nature, since it is by struggling with them that we attain the most heroic virtues.

Would you (to continue the same example) attain the virtue of patience—never avoid the persons, the business, not even the thoughts from whence you have experienced much impatience; but rather accustom yourself to converse with those who are most disagreeable to you. Be always willing to undergo every thing that is irksome. There is no other method of acquiring habitual patience.

If any employment gives you uneasi-

ness, either from its own nature, from those who impose it, or because it takes you from something else more agreeable to your inclinations, be sure not to throw it up on any of these accounts ; shew your courage not only in cheerfully accepting of it, but in persevering, whatever vexation arises from it, or satisfaction may be found in quitting it. Otherwise you will never learn to suffer, or enjoy that true peace which souls, divested of all passions, and adorned with every virtue, find in themselves.

The same is to be said of any thoughts which are very irksome. For you gain no advantage in being entirely freed from them, because the uneasiness they create, will inure you to bear the most vexatious incidents. Be assured, therefore, whoever teaches you a contrary method, shews you indeed how to avoid the trouble you dread, but not how to attain the virtue you really want.

The truth is, a new soldier, who wants experience, must be very discreet and cautious, sometimes attacking the enemy, at other times remaining on the defensive, as he finds his strength and courage will best bear ; but must never think of turning his back, or leaving the

fight, by shunning every occasion of trouble and vexation. Such behaviour indeed will remove the immediate occasion of impatience, but will leave you more than ever exposed to its assaults, for want of habitual patience.

What has been here alleged does not regard the vice of impurity, which, as before observed, can only be subdued by flight.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

That all opportunities of engaging the enemy in the acquisition of the several virtues, particularly those attended with the greatest difficulty, ought to be embraced with joy.

WE must not content ourselves with not avoiding opportunities of acquiring virtue, we must seek them, embrace them with great alacrity when found, and take the most delight in such as are attended with the greatest mortification, they being the most advantageous: nothing will appear difficult to us, with the assistance of Heaven, if we imprint deep in our hearts the following considerations.

The first is, that such opportunities are proper, not to say necessary means for acquiring virtue. Consequently, as often as we beg of God any particular virtue, at the same time we ask for those means which he appoints for the attaining it. Otherwise our prayer would be frivolous and contradictory to itself; it would be tempting God, who never bestows patience but through tribulation, nor humility but through ignominy.

The same is to be said of all other virtues, which are the fruits of those trials God is pleased to send us, and which we ought to cherish in proportion as they are severe; because the violence we use with ourselves, is of great efficacy towards forming habitual virtues in our souls.

Let us, therefore, be ever on our guard to mortify our own will, though but in a look too curious, or a word of too great freedom. For though the victories gained in matters of importance, are more honourable, yet those, where only trifles are concerned, are much more frequent.

• The second consideration, which we have already touched upon, is, that all things happen by God's appointment;

that we may advantage ourselves by them. Indeed, properly speaking, many things, such as the sins of men, cannot be said to happen by his appointment, who abhors iniquity; nevertheless, in some sense it is true, since he permits them when he has it in his power to prevent them. But as for afflictions, whether they befall us through our own or our enemies' fault, yet they certainly are appointed by him, however displeasing the immediate cause may be. He expects that we will bear them with patience, either because they are the means of our sanctification, or for other reasons unknown to us.

If, therefore, we are convinced, that to comply exactly with his holy will, we must receive without murmuring those evils which the malice of others or our sins draw upon us, how much in the wrong must all those be, who, to screen their own impatience, assert that God as he is infinitely just, can never lay any stress on what comes from a bad cause. It is evident their only aim is to avoid uneasiness, and to persuade the world they are in the right to reject the crosses God is pleased to send. But this is not all; if the thing were indif-

ferent on other accounts, yet God takes greater delight in seeing us bear patiently any injurious treatment, particularly from those who are under obligations to us, than on any other occasion of exerting our patience. And this for the following reasons.

The first is, because our innate pride is much better curbed by the ill usage we receive from others, than by any voluntary mortification we choose for ourselves. The second is, that in suffering on such occasions with patience, we conform to what God requires, and contribute to his glory, because we regulate our will by his, in a matter wherein his goodness and power are equally conspicuous, and from so vile a thing as sin itself, we gather the excellent fruits of virtue and sanctity.

Know then, that God no sooner finds us resolved to attain solid virtue, than he sends us trials of the severest kind. Thus being convinced of that immense love he bears us, and the affection he has for our spiritual advancement, we ought to receive with the greatest gratitude the cup he is pleased to offer us, and drink the last drop of it, being well assured that in proportion to its bitterness, we shall find it beneficial.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

How we may exercise the same Virtue on different occasions.

IN one of the preceding chapters it was said, that the applying ourselves for a time to one particular virtue, is preferable to the embracing the practice of too many at once, and that the particular virtue we have pitched upon must be cultivated on all occasions. We shall set down the manner of doing this with great facility.

It may happen on the same day, perhaps within the same hour, that you are severely reprimanded for some action in itself commendable, that you are ill-spoken of, or refused in a harsh manner some small favour; that you are unjustly suspected, or employed in a disagreeable affair; that your dinner is spoiled, or some illness seizes you, or perhaps are overwhelmed with far greater evils, of which this wretched life is very fertile; in such a combination of vexations, doubtless there is room for the exercise of several virtues, but, according to the foregoing rule, you will

reap the most benefit by applying yourself to the practice of that virtue which you chiefly want.

If it be patience, you must endeavour to bear with great courage and alacrity whatever evils may befall you. If it be humility, in all your sufferings you must remember, that they are far short of what your sins deserve. If it be obedience, resign yourself to the will of God, who justly punishes you. Even for the love of him, and since it is his pleasure, submit yourself not only to rational creatures, but also to those who, though void of sense or life, are the instruments of his divine justice. If it be poverty, be content under your afflictions, though deprived of the comforts and conveniences of life. If it be charity, exert yourself in forming acts of the love of God and your neighbour, remembering that when others try your patience, they give you an opportunity of increasing your merit; and that God, in sending or permitting the evils which besiege you, has no other view than your spiritual good.

What has been said of exercising the virtue you pursue in various occurrences, points out the method of practising it on any one particular occasion,

as in sickness or other trouble, whether of body or mind.

CHAPTER XL.

What time ought to be employed in acquiring each Virtue. The marks of the progress we make, &c.

IT is impossible to prescribe in general any determinate space of time to be employed in acquiring each virtue, as it depends on our different states and dispositions, the progress we make in a devout life, and the direction of our spiritual guide. But this is certain, that if the diligence and alacrity we have prescribed, be not wanting, in a few weeks we shall be far advanced.

- A sure mark of considerable progress, is perseverance in exercises of piety, in spite of all disgust, vexations, dryness, and the want of all sensible consolation. Another no less evident mark, is when our corrupt inclinations, subdued and kept under by reason, are no longer capable of interrupting us in the practice of virtue. For as those decay, virtue gains strength, and takes deeper root in our souls. Wherefore when we feel no

repugnance on the part of the inferior appetites, we may be assured of having acquired habitual virtue; and the greater facility in producing the several acts, the more perfect is the habit.

But you are not to imagine, that you are arrived to a great degree of sanctity, or that your passions are entirely subdued, because for a long time and in many trials you have not perceived any resistance: for know, that often the enemy, and our own corrupt nature thus disguise themselves for a time. And thus through a secret pride, we take that for virtue, which is the effect of vice. Moreover, if you consider the degree of perfection, to which God calls you, whatever you may have done hitherto, you will find yourself at a great distance from it. Persevere therefore in your usual exercises, as if you had but just begun, never suffering your first fervour to relent.

Remember that it is much better to endeavour to advance in virtue, than to examine too nicely what progress we have made: because God, to whom alone our hearts are known, discovers this secret to some, while he hides it from others, as he knows they are suscepti-

ble of humility, or vanity, from thence ; and thus this Father, equally gracious and wise, takes from the weak what might occasion their ruin, and affords to others the means of advancing in virtue. Thus, although a soul is ignorant what progress she makes, yet she must not abandon her exercises of devotion, since she will certainly know it when the Almighty shall please, for her greater good, to manifest it to her.

CHAPTER XLI.

That we must not be too solicitous to be freed from those Evils we bear with patience: In what manner our Desires are to be regulated.

WHEN you are in affliction, of whatever kind it be, and bear it with due patience, hearken not to the tempter, nor the suggestions of self-love, who stir up urgent desires of being freed from the trouble. For from such impatience two great evils will arise: the one, though you may not be entirely deprived of the habit of patience, yet there will remain a disposition to the contrary vice ; the other is, your patience will be

but imperfect, and your recompense proportionable to the time you exercised it: whereas, had you desired no relaxation, but shewed an entire resignation to the divine will, though your trouble had not lasted one quarter of an hour, God would have rewarded your willingness to suffer for years.

Take this therefore for a general rule, to desire nothing but in conformity with the will of God; to direct all your wishes thither, as the only scope to which they ought to tend; thus they will be ever equitable and holy; and whatever happens, you will remain undisturbed in the enjoyment of a perfect tranquillity. For, as all things here are appointed by Providence, if your will be entirely conformable to it, every thing will fall out agreeably to your desires, because nothing can happen but according to your will.

What is here advanced does not regard our own sins, or those of others, because held in the utmost detestation by the Almighty; but only such troubles as are the punishment of your crimes, or only trials of your virtue, though your heart should be pierced with grief, or even life itself in danger.

For these are the crosses with which God favours those he loves best.

If you should endeavour to mitigate your pain, and employ the ordinary means for that end without success, you must resolve to bear patiently the evil you cannot remedy. You are even obliged to have recourse to such means as are commendable in themselves and appointed by God for such ends ; but then let this be your motive for employing them, because he has so ordained, not out of any attachment to yourself, or too eager a desire of being freed from your afflictions.

CHAPTER XLII.

How to defend ourselves against the artifices of the Devil, when he suggests indiscreet Devotions.

WHEN the Devil, that subtle serpent, perceives we go courageously on towards Heaven, that all our desires tend to God alone, and that we are proof against his ordinary delusions, he transforms himself into an Angel of light ; he urges us to attain perfection, hurrying us on blindly and without the least re-

gard to our own weakness; he fills our heads with devout thoughts, seconding them with passages of the Holy Scripture, and examples drawn from the greatest Saints, in order to draw us into some shameful false step, through an indiscreet and precipitate fervour.

For example: he puts us upon chastising our bodies with excessive fasting, disciplines, and the like mortifications. His design is, that out of a notion of having performed wonders, we fall a prey to vanity, as is frequently the case in the weaker sex; or, that being dispirited with such penitential works as exceed our strength, we may be incapable of performing any exercises of devotion; or, that unable any longer to undergo such severe austerities, we may grow out of conceit with a devout life, and at last, being tired with the practice of virtue, return with greater relish than ever to the vanities of the world.

Who can number the multitudes that have perished in this manner? Presumption has blinded them so far, that, carried away with an indiscreet zeal of suffering, they fell into the snare they themselves have helped to contrive, and became the scorn of Devils. All which

might doubtless have been prevented, had they considered, that in all such mortifications, however commendable in themselves, or productive of excellent fruit, where there is strength of body, and humility of mind proportionable; in all such mortifications, I say, as we observed before, moderation must be observed, and a strict regard had to our several abilities. For every one is not capable of practising the austerities of the saints, and yet every one may imitate them in many things:—They may form ardent and efficacious desires of sharing in all the glorious crowns gained by the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual combats; they may imitate the saints in their contempt of the world and themselves, in their love of silence and retirement; in their humility and charity to all men; in their patiently suffering the greatest injuries, and returning good for evil to their worst enemies; in their care to avoid even the smallest faults; which are things infinitely more meritorious in the sight of God, than all the corporeal severities we can possibly inflict on ourselves.

It must likewise be observed, that at

first it is advisable to use some moderation in external works of penance, that there may be room to increase them if it should be requisite, rather than by any excess to endanger our being incapable of performing any. I mention this, because I am willing to believe you do not give into that gross mistake of many who make an idol of their health. These are ever in dread of being the least out of order, and their whole study and conversation runs on the means of avoiding sickness. Extremely nice in point of eating; instead of strengthening, they often ruin their stomachs by the use of delicious viands; and yet would make the world believe they have no other view, than to preserve themselves for God's greater glory.

Thus do they veil their sensuality; but the truth is, their design is to unite two irreconcilable enemies, the flesh and the spirit; which can only end in the ruin of both, as their health and devotion will equally suffer. Consequently those who live in a plain unaffected way, must make the greatest and surest advances in devotion.

But in all things discretion must be used, and regard had to different con-

stitutions, which are not all equally fitted for the same exercises.—And this is to be understood not only of exterior mortifications, but even of those practices which depend entirely upon the mind ; as we have shewn in treating of the manner of attaining by degrees the most sublime virtues.

CHAPTER XLIII.

That our corrupt Nature, prompted by the suggestions of the Devil, is apt to judge rashly of our Neighbour. In what manner this evil is to be remedied.

THE good opinion we have of ourselves, occasions another great disorder; that is rash judgment, which we not only encourage in our own breast, but endeavour to infuse into others. This vice, as it springs from, so is it nourished by pride ; and as in proportion we give way to it, we become more conceited of ourselves, and more exposed to the Devil's delusions. For by degrees we arrogate to ourselves as much as we detract from others, foolishly imagining ourselves exempt from the sins for which we so readily condemn our neighbours.

The enemy of our souls no sooner discovers this malicious propensity in us, but he immediately employs all his artifices to make us attentive to the failings of others, and magnify them beyond the truth. It is not to be expressed what pains he takes to make us observe the most trivial faults in our neighbour, when he cannot point out to us any thing of moment.

Since therefore he is so artful and intent on our destruction, let us be no less vigilant in discovering and defeating his designs. When he suggests to us other persons' sins, we must banish all such thoughts, and if he persists in endeavouring to draw us into rash judgment, we are to conceive an abhorrence of such malicious insinuations. Let us recollect that we are not authorized to judge others, or if we were how seldom does equity guide us, blinded as we are with prejudice and passion, and naturally inclined to put the worst construction upon the lives and actions of others.

The most efficacious remedy for this evil is to be ever mindful of our own wretchedness, where we shall find so much room for amendment, as to have

little inclination to judge and condemn others. Besides, in applying ourselves to the discovery of our own failings, we shall easily free the eye of our mind from a certain malignity which is the source of rash judgments. For whoever without just grounds condemns his neighbour, has too much reason to suspect himself guilty of the same crime, as vicious men are always prone to think others like themselves. When therefore we find ourselves inclined to condemn others, let us interiorly blame ourselves with this just reproof. Blind and presumptuous wretch, how darest thou thus rashly examine into thy neighbour's actions, thou who hast the same, and perhaps greater sins to answer for? Thus turning these weapons against ourselves, we may, instead of injuring our neighbour, remedy our own failings.

But if the fault be really and publicly known, let charity suggest some excuse; let us believe there are some hidden virtues, for the preservation of which, God was pleased to permit it; let us hope that this failing, in which God suffers him to remain for a time, may bring him to a true sense of himself; and that by being despised by others, he may learn

to humble himself, and consequently be a gainer by his fall. But where the sin, besides being public, is of an enormous nature; if the sinner is hardened in impenitence, let us raise our hearts to heaven, and contemplate the secret judgments of God; let us consider that many, after being buried in the worst of crimes, have become great saints, whilst others from the highest pitch of perfection have fallen into the lowest sink of sin and iniquity.

These reflections will convince every considerate person, that his distrust ought to begin at home, and that if he finds himself disposed to think favourably of his neighbour, it is owing to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost: whereas his rash judgments, his dislike and contempt of others, owe their rise to his own malice and the suggestions of the Devil. If, therefore, we ever find ourselves too attentive to the failings of others, let us not desist till we have entirely erased them from our memory.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of Prayer.

IF a diffidence of ourselves, a confidence in God, and a right application of the faculties of our souls, are weapons without which we can never succeed in the spiritual combat, as has been shown above; prayer, which remains to be treated of, is still far more necessary, since by it are obtained, not only those virtues, but every thing requisite for our salvation. This is the channel through which all Grace flows from above; by this is the Almighty compelled to assist us from his throne, and destroy by our hands, weak as they are, the fiercest of our foes. In order to employ it with success, the following method must be observed.

1. We must sincerely desire to serve God with fervour, and in the manner most agreeable to him. This desire will be kindled in our breasts, if we consider three things attentively. The first is, that God infinitely deserves our homage and service by reason of the excellence of his sovereign being, his

goodness, beauty, wisdom, power, and his endless unspeakable perfections. The second is, that God was made man, and during thirty-three years laboured for our salvation; that he condescended to dress our horrible wounds with his own hands, and healed them, not by pouring into them oil and wine, but by applying his own precious blood and immaculate body, torn and disfigured with cruel whips, thorns and nails. The third is, how much it concerns us to observe his law and discharge our duty, since through that, and only that, we can expect to triumph over the Devil, to become masters of ourselves, and the children of God.

2. We must have a lively faith and firm confidence that God will not refuse us the assistance necessary for serving him faithfully, and working out our salvation. A soul replenished with this holy confidence, is like a sacred vessel, into which the Divine mercy pours the treasures of his grace, and the more capacious this vessel is, the greater abundance of Heavenly blessings will it receive through prayer. For how can God, whose power knows no bounds, whose goodness cannot deceive, ever

refuse his gifts to those whom he so earnestly presses to demand them, and to whom he has promised his holy spirit, if we sue for it with faith and perseverance ?

3. Our motive for prayer must be the Divine will, not our own ; applying ourselves to this great duty because God commands it, and desiring to be heard no further than what is agreeable to him ; thus our intention will be to conform entirely our will to his, and not to make the Divine will subservient to our own. The reason for this is the perversity of our own will, tainted as it is with self-love, which frequently knows not what it would be at ; whereas the will of God, essentially just and holy, can never be mistaken. Consequently it ought to be the rule of every other will, since not to follow it is to go astray. Let us be solicitous that all our demands be agreeable to God ; and if there is the least doubt whether they are so or not, let an entire submission to the Divine Providence ever accompany them. But if the things we ask are certainly pleasing to him, such as grace, virtue, &c. let us beg them with a view of pleasing and serving his Divine Majesty, rather

than on any other consideration, though never so pious.

4. If we desire our prayers should be heard, our actions must be suitable to our petitions ; we must exert ourselves before and after prayer, in rendering ourselves worthy of the favour we ask. For prayer and interior mortification must be inseparable ; since he that begs any particular virtue without striving to put it in practice, only tempts God.

5. Before we ask any thing, we ought to return most humble thanks to God for all the benefits he has graciously bestowed upon us. We may say : Lord, who after creating me, hast mercifully paid the price of my redemption, and delivered me from the fury of my enemies times without number, come to my assistance, and, forgetting all my past ingratitude, bestow on me this favour I now ask. But if at the very time we seek to attain some one particular virtue, we find ourselves tempted to the contrary vice, we must thank God for giving us such an opportunity of practising that virtue ; we ought to look upon it as a particular favour at that instant.

6. The whole force and efficacy of

prayer, being solely due to the goodness of God, the merits of our Saviour's life and passion, and the promise he has made graciously to hear us, we ought always to conclude our prayers with one or more of these sentences. I beseech thee, O Lord, through thy infinite mercy, grant my petition. Through the merits of thy Son, bestow this favour on me. Be mindful, O my God, of thy promises, and hear my prayers. Sometimes we may also have recourse to the intercession of the blessed Virgin and other saints. For they can prevail much with God, who is pleased thus to honour them, in proportion to the honour they paid him during their abode on earth.

7. We must persist in this exercise, since it is certain God cannot refuse to hear an humble perseverance in prayer. For if the importunity of the widow, in the Gospel, prevailed with the wicked judge, can our prayers fail of success with God, who is infinitely good? And thus, though he should not immediately grant what we ask, though he should seem not even to hear us, we must not for all this lose our confidence in his infinite goodness, nor desist from prayer; for he possesses both an immense

power and will to do good to us. Consequently, if we are not wanting to ourselves, we shall infallibly obtain what we ask, or something better, and perhaps both. As for the rest, the more we think ourselves slighted, the greater ought to be our hatred and contempt of ourselves, but with this condition, that the consideration of our own misery leads us to contemplate the Divine mercy, and far from lessening our confidence in him, we must increase it by reflecting, that the steadier we remain in the midst of so much cause of diffidence, the greater will be our merit.

In fine, let us never cease to thank God ; let us equally bless his wisdom, his goodness, his charity, whether he grants or refuses our petition : whatever happens, let us be undisturbed, contented and resigned to his Providence in all things.

CHAPTER XLV.

Of Mental Prayer.

MENTAL prayer is the raising our minds to God, and either expressly or tacitly asking those things of which we stand in need.

We ask for them expressly, when we say in our hearts : O my God, grant me this favour for the honour of thy holy name : or, Lord, I am firmly convinced that it is thy will, and for thy greater honour, that I ask this blessing ; accomplish, therefore, now thy Divine will in me. When hard pressed by the attacks of our enemies, we may say : haste, O Lord, to my assistance, lest I fall a prey to my enemies ; or, my God, my refuge and my strength, help me speedily, lest I perish. If the temptation continues, we must likewise continue the same prayer, courageously resisting the fiend.—When the fury of the combat is passed, let us address ourselves to the Almighty, begging him to consider on one side the strength of the enemy, and on the other our weakness, saying, behold here, O my God, thy creature, the work of thy hands ; behold a man redeemed with thy precious blood. See the Devil endeavouring to carry him from thee, and utterly destroy him. It is to thee I fly for succour, in thee I place all my confidence, because I know thou art infinitely good and infinitely powerful. Have pity on a blind man, though wilfully so, who without

the assistance of thy grace must inevitably fall a prey to his enemies. Help me, therefore, O my only hope, O sole strength of my soul.

We tacitly ask favours of God when we lay before him our necessities, without making any particular request. Placing ourselves therefore in his presence, and acknowledging that of ourselves we are unable to avoid evil or do good, yet inflamed with a desire of serving him, we must fix our eyes on him, waiting for his assistance with great confidence and humility.—This confession of our weakness, this desire to serve him, this act of faith thus performed, is a silent prayer, which will infallibly obtain of heaven what we wish, and will carry the greater force, as the confession is the more sincere, the desire the more ardent, and the faith the more lively. There is another manner of prayer of this sort, but more concise, which consists in one act of the soul, laying before the Almighty her wants, that is calling to mind a favour which has been already asked, and still besought without expressing it.

Let us endeavour to practise this kind of prayer, and learn to employ it on all

occasions : for experience will convince us, that as nothing is more easy, so nothing is more excellent and efficacious.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Of Meditation.

WHEN a long time is to be employed in prayer, as half an hour, an hour, or even more, it is advisable to form a meditation on some part of our Saviour's life or passion, and apply the reflections naturally arising from thence, to that particular virtue we are endeavouring to attain.

If you stand in need of patience, contemplate the mystery of your Saviour scourged at the pillar. Think 1st. How the soldiers, being ordered to bring him to the place appointed, dragged him thither with loud cries and bitter scoffs. 2d. How being stripped of his garments, he was exposed to the piercing cold. 3d. How his innocent hands were bound tight to the pillar. 4th. How his body was torn with whips, till the blood flowed in streams to the ground. 5th. How the strokes being often repeated on the

same part, increased and renewed his wounds.

While you dwell on these, or the like particulars, proper to inspire you with the love of patience, endeavour to feel interiorly, in the most lively manner, the inexpressible anguish your divine Master endured all over his body. From thence pass to the cruel pangs his blessed soul endured, and endeavour to conceive the patience and mildness with which he suffered, ever ready to undergo even more for his Father's glory, and your good.

After this behold him covered with blood, and be assured, that he desires nothing more earnestly than that you bear your affliction with patience; and that he implores his heavenly Father's assistance for enabling you to bear with resignation, not only this cross, but all others for the future. Strengthen with repeated acts, the resolution you have taken of suffering with joy; then, raising your mind to heaven, give thanks to the Father of mercies, who vouchsafed to send his only Son into the world, to suffer such horrible torments, and to intercede for you. Conclude with beseeching him to give you the virtue of

patience, through the merits and intercession of this beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Another method of Prayer by way of Meditation.

THERE is another method of prayer and meditation, as follows. After having considered with great attention the pains your Saviour felt, and his cheerfulness in suffering, you may proceed to two other considerations of equal moment.

The one is, the contemplation of his infinite merits—the other, of that satisfaction and glory which the eternal Father received from his obedience, even to death, even the death of the cross.

You must represent these two considerations to the Divine Majesty, as two powerful means of obtaining the grace you ask. This method is applicable not only to all the mysteries of our Saviour's passion, but to every act, whether interior or exterior, he formed in each mystery.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A method of Prayer grounded on the intercession of our Blessed Lady.

BESIDES the methods of meditation already mentioned, there is another which is addressed particularly to the blessed Virgin. First, represent to yourself the eternal Father, then Jesus Christ our Lord, and lastly his ever blessed Mother.

With regard to the eternal Father, you are to consider two things. The first is, that singular affection he had from all eternity to this most chaste Virgin, even before he had drawn her out of nothing. The second is, that eminent sanctity he was pleased to bestow on her, and all the virtues she practised during her whole life.

Concerning the first you must begin with raising your mind above all created beings; anticipate all time, launch into the vast expanse of eternity, enter into the heart of God, and see with what delight he viewed in futurity the person he appointed to be the mother of his Son; beseech him by that delight to give

you sufficient strength against your enemies, especially those who press hardest upon you. Then contemplate the virtues and heroic actions of this incomparable Virgin; make an offering of them all, or of each one singly to God, making a merit of them towards obtaining of the divine goodness whatever your necessities may require.

After this address yourself to Jesus, and beg of him to be mindful of that amiable mother, who for nine months carried him in her womb, and from the first instant of his birth paid him the most profound adoration, in acknowledgment of his being at once God and man, her Creator and Son; who with great compassion saw him poorly accommodated in a stable, nourished him with her pure milk, kissed and embraced him a thousand times with maternal fondness, and through his whole life, and even at his death, suffered for him beyond expression. Lay all this so strongly before him, that he may be compelled, as it were, by such powerful motives, to hear your prayers.

Lastly, apply to the blessed Virgin herself, say, that Providence destined her from all eternity to be the Mother

of Mercy, and refuge of sinners : and consequently, that after her Divine Son, you place your greatest confidence in her intercession. Represent to her what so many learned men have asserted, and what has been confirmed by so many miraculous events, that no one ever called upon her with a lively faith, without experiencing her assistance. In fine, represent to her the sufferings of her Son for your salvation, that she may obtain of him the grace necessary for making a right use of it to the greater glory of that amiable Saviour.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Some considerations to induce Sinners to confide in the assistance of the Blessed Virgin.

WHOEVER is desirous to have recourse to the blessed Virgin with due confidence, must attend to the following motives.

1. Experience teaches us, that a vessel, which has contained perfumes, preserves the odour of them, especially if it were for any considerable time, or if any still remain in it ; yet they have but

a limited force, no more than fire, whose warmth is retained after removing from it. If so, what shall we say of the charity and compassion of the blessed Virgin, who for nine months bore, and still carries in her heart the only Son of God, the increated charity which knows no bounds. If as often as we approach a great fire, we are affected by its heat, does it not follow, and have we not great reason to believe, that whoever approaches Mary, that mother of mercies, that heart ever burning with the most ardent charity, must be the more affected the oftener he addresses himself to her, and the greater his reliance and humility is?

2. No created being ever bore such ardent love to Jesus Christ, nor shewed so perfect a submission to his will, as his blessed mother. If, therefore, this divine Saviour, who gave himself a sacrifice for us wretched sinners—if, I say, this Saviour has appointed his own mother to be mother to us all, our advocate and intercessor to him, she cannot but comply with his appointment, and will never refuse us her assistance. Let us not hesitate to implore her pity; let us have recourse to her with great

confidence in all our necessities, she being an inexhaustible source of blessings, and ever proportions her favours to the confidence placed in her.

CHAPTER L.

A method of Meditation and Prayer, through the intercession of the Saints and Angels.

IN order to obtain the protection of the Saints and Angels, the two following methods may be employed.

The first is to address yourself to the eternal Father, and lay before him the Divine hymns of the Heavenly choirs, the labours, the persecutions, the torments, undergone by the saints while on earth for the love of him; and then by all these marks of their respect, their fidelity, their love, conjure him to grant your petitions.

The second is, to call upon those blessed spirits, who earnestly desire not only that we may attain their perfection here, but even greater hereafter. Beg, therefore, earnestly, that they would assist you in subduing your evil inclinations and overthrowing the enemies

of your salvation, but particularly to be mindful of you in the hour of death. Sometimes revolve in your mind the extraordinary graces they received from the Almighty, and rejoice as if they had been bestowed on yourself. Nay, your joy may be greater for his having rather bestowed such favours on them than on yourself, because such was his Divine will; for which you ought to bless and praise his holy name.

But that this exercise may be attended with less difficulty, and performed with greater regularity, it will be proper to assign the several days of the week to the different orders of the blessed. On Sunday, beg the intercession of the nine Choirs of Angels; on Monday, invoke St. John Baptist; on Tuesday, the Patriarchs and Prophets; on Wednesday, the Apostles; on Thursday, the Martyrs; on Friday, the Bishops and Confessors; on Saturday, the Virgins and other Saints. But let no day pass without imploring the assistance of our blessed Lady, the Queen of all Saints, without invoking your Angel guardian, the glorious archangel St. Michael, or any other Saint, to whom you have any particular devotion.

Moreover, daily beseech the eternal Father, Jesus Christ, and the blessed Virgin, that you may be particularly under the protection of Saint Joseph, the worthy Spouse of the chastest of Virgins. Then addressing yourself to him, ask with great humility, to be received into his protection. Numberless are the instances related of this saint's wonderful assistance afforded to those who have called upon him in their necessities, whether spiritual or corporeal; and chiefly when they have stood in need of light from Heaven, and an invisible director in their prayers. And if God shews so much regard to other Saints, on account of their having loved and served him here, what consideration and deference will he not manifest for the person he honoured so highly on earth, as to be subject to, and obey as a Father?

CHAPTER LI.

Of Meditation on the sufferings of Christ, and the affecting sentiments to be drawn from thence.

WHAT I before laid down concerning the method of praying and meditat-

ing on the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, regarding only the asking for that we stand in need of, we are now to proceed to the forming from thence various affecting sentiments. If, therefore, for example, you have chose for the subject of your meditation the crucifixion of the Man-God, among other circumstances of that mystery, you may dwell on these which follow.

Consider 1st. That Jesus being arrived on Mount Calvary, the executioners rudely stripped him, tearing off the skin with the clothes, to which his wounds and congealed blood had now closely cemented it. 2d. That taking off his crown of thorns, and setting it on again in derision, his sacred head was pierced in fresh places. 3d. That he was fastened to the cross with large nails drove by heavy hammers. 4th. That his hands not reaching to the places designed for them, they were stretched so violently, that all his bones were disjoined and might easily be counted, Psalm xxi. 18. 5th. That being elevated on the cross, the whole weight of his body rested on the nails, which tore the wounds of his hands and feet wider, and gave him most exquisite pain.

If by these and the like considerations you are desirous of kindling in your breast the flames of Divine love, endeavour to attain by meditation a sublime knowledge of your Saviour's infinite goodness, who, for your sake, condescended to suffer so much. For the more you advance in the knowledge of his love for you, the greater will be your love and affection for him. Being thus convinced of his exceeding great charity, you will naturally conceive a sincere sorrow for having so often and so heinously offended him, who offered himself a sacrifice for your offences.

From thence proceed to form acts of hope, from the consideration, that this great God had no other design on the cross than to extirpate sin out of the world, to free you from the tyranny of the Devil, to expiate your crimes, to reconcile you to his father, and provide a resource for you in all your necessities. But if after contemplating his passion, you consider its effects; if you observe, that by his death the sins of men were blotted out, the anger of a sovereign Judge appeased, the powers of Hell defeated, Death itself vanquished, the places of the fallen angels filled up in Hea-

ven, your grief will be turned into joy—and this joy will increase by reflecting on the joy which the holy Trinity, the blessed Virgin, the church militant and triumphant receive from the accomplishing of the great work of the redemption of mankind.

If you would conceive a lively sorrow for your sins, let your meditation tend no farther than to convince you, that if Jesus Christ suffered so much, it was to inspire you with a wholesome hatred of yourself and your disorderly passions, particularly of that which occasions your greatest failings, and consequently most offensive to all-mighty God.

If you would excite sentiments of admiration, you need only consider, that nothing can be so surprising as to see the Creator of the Universe, the Fountain of Life, butchered by his own creatures; to see the Supreme majesty as it were annihilated, justice condemned, beauty itself defiled and lost under filth, the object of the Eternal Father's love become the hatred of sinners; light inaccessible overwhelmed by the powers of darkness, uncreated glory and felicity buried under ignominy and wretchedness.

To excite compassion in your breast for the sufferings of your Saviour and your God, besides his exterior pains, consider those interior ones which far exceeded the others. For if you are moved with the former, your heart will be pierced with grief at the sight of the latter. The soul of Christ beheld the Divinity at that instant as clearly as it does now in Heaven: It knew how much God deserved to be honoured; and as it infinitely loved him, it likewise earnestly desired that all his creatures should love him with all their force. Seeing him therefore so horribly dishonoured throughout the world by numberless abominable crimes, it was overwhelmed with a grief answerable to its love and desire, that the Divine Majesty should be loved and served by all men. As the greatness of this love and desire was beyond imagination, it is in vain to endeavour to comprehend the excess of those interior pains which Christ endured in the agonies of death.

Besides, as this Divine Saviour loved mankind beyond any thing that can be expressed, such a tender and ardent affection must have created an extreme affliction for those sins which would

tear them from him. He knew that no one could commit a mortal sin, without destroying that sanctifying grace which is the spiritual bond of union between him and the just. And this separation would cause greater anguish to the soul of Jesus, than the dislocation of his limbs was to his body. For the soul being altogether spiritual and of a nature far more perfect than the body, of consequence must be more exquisitely capable of pain. But doubtless the most grievous affliction our blessed Saviour underwent, was, the view of the sins of the damned, who being incapable of repenting, must be banished from him for all eternity.

If the contemplation of so many sufferings moves you to compassion for your dying Jesus, go on, and you will find that he suffered excessively, not only from the sins you have actually committed, but even on account of those you have not committed, since the last drop of his precious blood was poured out both to wash away the former and preserve you from the latter. Trust me, you can never want motives for taking part in the sufferings of Jesus crucified. Know, moreover, that there ne-

ver was, nor ever will be in any rational creature that affliction which he hath not experienced: injuries, reproaches, temptations, pains, loss of goods, voluntary austerities, and this more exquisitely than those who actually groan under them. For as this tender parent has a perfect comprehension of whatever we are liable to suffer, whether in body or mind, even to the least pain or head-ache, he must certainly have been moved with great compassion for us.

But who can express what he felt at the sight of his blessed mother's affliction? She shared in all the pangs and outrages with which his passion was attended, and this with the same views and from the same motives; and though her sufferings were infinitely short of his, yet were they beyond expression. This redoubled all the sorrows of Jesus, and pierced his heart still deeper. Hence it was that a certain devout soul compared the heart of Jesus to a burning furnace, in which he voluntarily suffered from the ardent flames of Divine love.

And after all, what is the cause of such unspeakable torments? No other than our sin: and, therefore, the great-

est compassion and gratitude we can possibly shew towards him who has suffered so much for us, is to be truly sorry for our past offences, and this purely for the love of him ; to detest sin beyond all things, because displeasing to him ; to wage continual war against our evil inclinations, as his greatest enemies ; that thus divesting ourselves of the old man, and putting on the new, we may adorn our souls with virtue, in which alone their beauty consists.

CHAPTER LII.

Of the fruits arising from Meditations on the Cross, and the imitation of the virtues of Christ crucified.

GREAT are the advantages which may be reaped from meditating on the cross. The first is, not only a detestation of past sins, but a firm resolution to fight against our disorderly appetites, which crucified our Saviour, and are not as yet extinguished in us. The second is, the obtaining of Jesus crucified, the forgiveness of sins committed, and the grace of a wholesome hatred of ourselves, so as never to offend him more,

but to love and serve him with our whole hearts for the future, in acknowledgment of what he suffered for our sakes. The third is, to labour without ceasing in rooting out all depraved habits, however trivial they may appear. The fourth is, to exert ourselves in imitating the virtues of this divine Master, who died not only to expiate our sins, but to set us the example of a life of sanctity and perfection.

The following method of meditation will be highly serviceable. In the supposition that you desire to imitate the patience, among other virtues of your Saviour, in bearing the crosses which befall you, weigh well these several points. 1st. What the soul of Jesus did on the cross for God. 2nd. What God did for the soul of Jesus. 3d. What the soul of Jesus did for itself and its body. 4th. What Jesus did for us. 5th. What we ought to do for Jesus.

1st. Consider in the first place, that the soul of Jesus, swallowed up in the ocean of the Divinity, contemplated that infinite and incomprehensible Being, before whom all creatures, even the most exalted, are a mere nothing; con-

templated, I say, in a state, wherein, without the least diminution of its essential glory and splendour, it debases itself so far as to suffer all sorts of indignities from vile ungrateful man ; and then adored its sovereign Majesty ; giving it millions of thanks, and accepting of every thing for its service.

2nd. Behold on the other hand what God did in regard of the soul of Jesus ; consider that his will was, that this only Son, so dear to him, should, for the love of us, be buffeted, spit upon, blasphemed, torn with whips, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. See with what delight he beholds him loaded with infamy and overwhelmed with affliction for so deserving an end.

3d. Contemplate after this the soul of Jesus, and observe, that knowing the pleasure God took in seeing it suffer, for the love it bears the Divinity, either on account of his immense perfections, or the infinite favours received, it submitted itself to his will in all things with the greatest alacrity. Who can describe its ardent affection for crosses ? It sought even new ways of suffering, but failing in this, it abandoned itself and the innocent body, to the mercy of miscreants and the powers of Hell.

4th. Then turn your eyes to Jesus, who in the midst of most cruel torments, thus addresses himself to you in the most affectionate manner: see to what excess of misery I am reduced by thy ungovernable will, which refuses the least constraint in compliance with mine. See the horrible pains I endure, with no other view but to teach thee a lesson of patience. Let me conjure thee, by all these sufferings, to accept with resignation this cross I here present, and all those I shall send thee hereafter. Give up thy reputation to calumny, thy body to the fury of such persecutors as I shall choose for thy trial, however vile and inhuman they may be. O that thou didst know what delight thy patience and resignation afford me! But how canst thou be ignorant of it, when thou beholdest these wounds I have received, to purchase for thee, at the price of my blood, those virtues, with which I would willingly adorn thy soul, more dear to me than life itself? If I have suffered myself to be reduced to this extremity for thy sake, canst thou not bear a light affliction, in order to mitigate a little the excess of mine; canst thou refuse to

heal those wounds I have received through thy impatience, more cruel to me than the pangs I suffer ?

5th. Consider who it is that speaks thus to you, and you will find that it is Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, true God and true Man. Consider the greatness of his torments and humiliations, beyond what the worst of criminals deserve. Be astonished to behold him in the midst of these agonies, not only fixed and resolute, but even replenished with joy, as if the day of his passion was a day of triumph. Think, that as a few drops of water sprinkled upon a furnace, only add a fresh fierceness to it ; so his torments, which to his charity appeared light, served but to increase his joy and desire of suffering still greater.

Moreover, reflect that all he did and suffered, was neither through constraint nor interest, but from a motive of the most pure love, as he has declared, and in order to teach you how to practise patience. Endeavour, therefore, to attain a perfect knowledge of what he demands of you, and the delight he takes in seeing you put in practice this virtue ; then form an ardent desire of car-

rying the cross, under which you labour, not only with patience but with joy, and even others far heavier, that you may more exactly imitate Christ crucified, and render yourself the more acceptable to him.

Represent to yourself all the torments and ignominies of his passion, and astonished at the constancy he shews, blush at your own weakness; look upon your own sufferings, when compared with his, as merely imaginary, and be convinced that your patience is not even the shadow of his. Dread nothing so much as an unwillingness to suffer for your Saviour, and if such a thought but present itself, reject it as a suggestion from Hell.

Consider Jesus on the cross as a devout book, which you ought to study without ceasing, to learn the practice of the most heroic virtues. This is the book which may be truly called the book of life, Revel. iii. 5. Which at once enlightens the mind by its doctrines, and inflames the will by its examples. The world is full of books, but were it possible for a man to read them all, he would never be so well instructed to hate vice and embrace virtue, as by con-

templating a crucified God. But remember, that such as spend whole hours in bewailing the passion of our Lord, and admiring his patience, yet on the first occasion betray as great an impatience of suffering as if they had never thought on the cross; such, I say, are like raw soldiers, who in their tents breathe nothing but conquests, but on the first appearance of the enemy, shamefully run away. What is there more despicable than after considering, admiring, and extolling the virtues of our Redeemer, in an instant to neglect and forget them all, when an opportunity offers of putting them in practice?

CHAPTER LIII.

Of the Eucharist.

THUS far I have endeavoured, as you may have observed, to furnish you with four sorts of spiritual weapons, and teach you the method of employing them; it remains to lay before you the great succour you may draw from the most holy Eucharist, for subduing the enemies of your perfection and salvation. As this august sacrament sur-

passes in dignity and efficacy all the rest, it is also the most terrible of all weapons to the infernal powers. The four we have already treated of, have no force but through the merits of Jesus Christ, and by the grace he has acquired for us with his precious blood; but this contains Jesus Christ himself, his body, his blood, his soul and divinity. Those are bestowed upon us by God, that we may with them subdue our enemies through Jesus Christ; but this is given us that we may fight against them with him: because, by eating his body and drinking his blood, we dwell with him and he in us. But, as we may eat his body and drink his blood, two different ways, in reality every day, and spiritually every hour, both highly profitable and holy; the latter ought to be practised as often as possible, the former as often as shall be judged expedient.

CHAPTER LIV.

In what manner we ought to receive the blessed Sacrament.

THE motives for approaching this divine Sacrament are many. From

thence it comes, that several particulars are to be observed at three different times, viz. before communion, at communion, and after communion.

Before communion, whatever the motive be, we must never fail of cleansing our souls by the sacrament of penance, if defiled with the guilt of mortal sin. After this we are to offer ourselves with all sincerity to Jesus Christ, and consecrate our souls with all their faculties to his service, since in this sacrament he bestows on us himself entire, his body, blood, soul and divinity, accompanied with the immense treasure of his infinite merits. And as all we can present to him is nothing in comparison with what he gives us, we must wish to be possessed of all the merits which the created beings of the universe could ever offer, that the present might deserve the regard of an infinite Majesty.

If our design be to obtain some victory over our spiritual enemies, let us, for some days before communion, meditate on the ardent desire our blessed Saviour has of entering into our breasts by this sacrament that he may be united to us, and assist us in subduing our disordered

appetites. The ardency of this desire is infinitely beyond our comprehension.

In order to form some idea of it, let us endeavour to comprehend two things. The one is, the unspeakable pleasure which the wisdom incarnate takes in dwelling among us, calling it his delight, Prov. viii. 3. The other is, the infinite hatred he bears to mortal sin, both as it is an insuperable obstacle to that intimate union he so much seeks with us, and as it is destructive, so far as in it lies, of the divine attributes. For as God is sovereignly good, a pure light, a beauty without spot, he must necessarily abhor sin, which is all malice, all darkness, all filth and corruption. So great is his abhorrence, that all he has done in both the Old and New Testaments, all that his Son suffered in his life and passion, all tended only to the destruction of it. Several great saints have not doubted to assert, that he would consent his Son, dear as he is, should suffer a thousand deaths were it necessary, for the expiation of the least of our faults.

From these two considerations having gathered, though very imperfectly, how much our Saviour desires to enter our

hearts, that he may entirely exterminate for ever his and our enemies from thence, we ought to conceive and show a most ardent impatience for his reception. The hopes of his arrival will raise our courage, and inspire us to declare war anew against the predominant passion we struggle with, forming as many acts as possible of the contrary virtue; and this particularly on the evening and morning before communion.

When we are on the point of receiving the body of our Lord, let us for a moment take a review of all the faults we have committed since our last communion, and in order to conceive a true sorrow, let us reflect that we committed them with as little remorse as if God had not died upon a cross for us: this must cover us with confusion, and strike a terror for having basely preferred a trifling compliance with our own will, to the obedience due to so gracious a Master. But when we consider, that notwithstanding our ingratitude and infidelity, this God of all charity still condescends to bestow himself upon us, to invite us to receive him—let us then approach him with great confidence, opening our hearts that he may enter and take pos-

session of them ; after this let us shut them close, that no unclean affection may creep in.

After communion we are to remain in a profound recollection, adoring our Lord with great humility, and saying in our hearts—Thou seest, O God of my soul, my wretched propensity to sin—Thou seest how this passion domineers over me, and that of myself I cannot resist it. It is thou must fight my battles, and, if I have any share in the combat, 'tis from thee alone that I must hope for victory. Then addressing ourselves to the Eternal Father, let us offer to him this beloved Son now bestowed upon, and dwelling within us ; let us offer him in thanks for so many benefits received, and in order to obtain through his assistance a complete victory over ourselves. In fine, let us form a resolution of fighting courageously against that particular enemy, from whom we suffer most ; and we may expect to conquer, since, if we are not wanting on our part, God sooner or later will certainly crown our endeavours with success.

CHAPTER LV.

The manner of preparing for Communion, in order to excite ourselves to the love of God.

IF our motive for communion be a desire of increasing the love of God in us, we must call to mind the love which God bears to us. The preparation consists in considering with great attention, that this sovereign Lord, whose power and majesty are without bounds, was not satisfied with creating us according to his own image and likeness, nor with sending his only Son to expiate our sins by a laborious life of upwards of thirty years, and a death on the cross no less cruel than ignominious; but also has left him to us in this sacrament, to be our food and support in all our necessities. Weigh well the greatness and singularity of this love in the following manner:

1st. As to its duration, we shall find that it is eternal, and never had a beginning. For as God is from all eternity, so long hath he loved man, even to the bestowing his Son upon him in this incomprehensible manner. Say, there-

fore, in a transport of joy—True it is that such a despicable creature as I am, have been so much esteemed and beloved of God, that he was pleased to think of me from all eternity, designing the body and blood of his only Son for my food and nourishment.

2d. Our strongest passions for earthly things are circumscribed by certain limits which they cannot exceed. The love alone which God bears us, knows no bounds. To fulfil it, he sent his Son, equal to himself in substance and perfections. Thus is the gift equal to his love, and his love to the gift; both infinite, and beyond the reach of all created understandings.

3d. In thus loving us, God was not under the least constraint, but only influenced by the excess of his love, naturally tending to heap benefits on us.

4th. We have not performed the least good action, or acquired the least merit towards deserving his love; and if he has loved us to this excess, if he has given himself entirely to us, it is all owing to his immense charity.

5th. His love for us is most pure, and, as may be observed, no ways blended with views of interest like the friend-

ships of this world. What is all we are worth to him, who in himself, independently of us, possesses the source of all happiness and glory? When, therefore, he showers his blessings upon us, he has no other view but our advantage. With this thought let each one say in himself—Who could have imagined, O Lord, that a God infinitely great, should place his affections on so vile and abject a creature as myself? What could be thy design, O King of Glory? What couldst thou expect from dust and ashes? That ardent charity in which thou art encircled, that fire which at once enlightens and inflames me, convinces me that thou hadst but that one design, and consequently that thy love is void of all self-interest; thy design in giving thyself entire to me in this sacrament, is to transform me into thee, that I may live in thee, and thou in me; and that by so intimate an union I become one with thee, and change an earthly heart, such as mine, into a heart entirely spiritual and divine, as is thine.

After this, let us enter into sentiments of joy and admiration at the marks the Son of God gives us of his esteem and love; and being convinced,

that his only aim is to win our hearts entirely over to him, by weaning us from creatures and attaching us to himself, let us offer ourselves as an Holocaust, that our will, memory and understanding may be no longer influenced by any other principle than a love and desire of pleasing him.

Then reflecting, that without his grace we are utterly incapable of being properly disposed for receiving the holy Eucharist, let us lay open our hearts to obtain it, employing short but ardent ejaculations, like the following aspirations: O Heavenly food! when shall I be united to thee, and be happily consumed in the fire of divine love? When shall I, O divine charity! O living bread! when shall I live only in thee, by thee, and for thee alone? O Heavenly manna! O my life! O life of eternal happiness! when shall I see the day, that, disgusted with all this world affords, I shall seek my nourishment from thee alone? O sovereign good! O only joy of my heart! when will the happy time come? Disengage, O my God, from this moment, disengage my heart from the slavery of its passions and vices; adorn it with thy Heavenly virtues; stifle all

desire in it, but that of loving and pleasing thee. Then will I lay it open, and beg thou wilt please to enter it; and to prevail, I will, if necessary, employ even an affectionate violence. Thither shalt thou come, O my only treasure, and nothing shall prevent thy presence from producing its desired effects. Such are the tender and affectionate sentiments which ought to be formed, especially on the evening and morning before communion.

When the time draws near, we are to consider attentively who we are going to receive. No less than the Son of the living God; the august Majesty, before whom the Heavens, and the powers of the Heavens shake for fear; the Saint of Saints, the Mirror without spot, Purity itself, before whom every thing is unclean; it is this God humbled, who, though the dread arbiter of life and death, was pleased for man's salvation to become like a worm of the earth, the derision of a mob, to be rejected with scorn, mocked, trampled upon, defiled with spittle, and fastened to a cross by a factious party of worldlings. On the other side, consider, that of yourself you are nothing; that your sins have

reduced you below the vilest of creatures, even brutes themselves; in a word, you have deserved to become a slave to Devils. Reflect, that instead of shewing your gratitude for infinite favours received, you have barbarously insulted your Redeemer, have even trampled upon his blood, shed for you as the price of your redemption.

But still your ingratitude cannot overcome his unchangeable charity. Still he calls upon you to approach his banquet, and, so far from excluding you, he threatens you with death if you absent yourself. This merciful Father's arms are ever open to receive you: and though you appear to him a mere leper, lame, blind, a demoniac, and what is still worse, full of sin and iniquity, yet he flies not from you, he shews no aversion; all he demands of you is, 1st. To conceive a sincere sorrow for having so shamefully offended him. 2d. To hate sin above all things. 3d. To be ever ready to do his will, with great alacrity and cheerfulness on all occasions. 4th. To have a firm confidence that he will forgive all your debts, cleanse you from all stain, and defend you against all your enemies.

Being thus animated by reflecting on the love he bears penitent sinners, approach the holy table with a fear tempered by hope and love, saying—I am not worthy to receive thee, after so many heinous offences, and without making sufficient satisfaction to thy justice. No, my God, I am not worthy to receive thee, sullied as I am with an attachment to creatures, and have not as yet begun to love and serve thee with my whole strength. Ah! my God, forget not thy wonted goodness; be mindful of thy promise; make me worthy through love and faith to receive thee.

After communion be profoundly recollected, and shutting out every thing else from thy heart, entertain thy Saviour with these or the like expressions: O sovereign Lord of Heaven! what can have brought thee thus low, to visit a poor, wretched, blind creature? His answer will be, Love. To which you must reply—O eternal Love! what is it thou askest of me? Nothing but Love, he will answer—I would have no other fire in thy breast but that of charity. That fire will extinguish the impure flames of thy passions, and inflame thy heart, and make it a victim of sweet

odour before me. This is what I have long desired, and do still desire; that thou be all mine, and I all thine; which can never be, if instead of a conformity to my will, thou followest thy own, ever fond of liberty and the vanity of this world. Know then, that what I would have thee do, is, to hate thyself that thou mayest love me alone, giving me thy heart in order to unite it to mine, which was opened on the cross for its reception. Thou knowest who I am, and seest nevertheless, that in some measure I have made thee my equal, through an excess of love. When I give myself entire to thee, I ask but thee in return—be mine and I am satisfied: Seek nothing but me; think of nothing else; look upon and listen to me alone, that I may be the sole object of thy thoughts and desires—that thou mayest only act in and through me, that my immense greatness absorb thy nothing, and that thus thou mayest find thy happiness in me, and I my repose in thee.

To conclude, make an offering to the Eternal Father of his beloved Son. 1st. In thanksgiving for the favour he has done in thus bestowing him on thee. 2d. To obtain what is necessary, whether it

be for thyself, the whole church, thy kindred and benefactors, or the souls in purgatory; uniting this offering with that our Saviour made of himself on the cross, when bathed in his own blood and covered with wounds, he offered himself an holocaust to his Father for the world's redemption. For the same intention may be offered the sacrifice of the Mass, wherever it is celebrated that day throughout the Christian world.

CHAPTER LVI.

Of Spiritual Communion.

ALTHOUGH a real communion is at the oftenest restrained to once a day, yet you are at liberty, as was said above, to communicate in spirit every hour; and nothing but your own negligence can prevent your receiving this great benefit. And it is worth observing, that a spiritual communion is sometimes of greater advantage to the soul, and more acceptable to God, than many sacramental communions performed with little preparation and affection. When, therefore, you are disposed to receive the Son of God spiritually, be

assured he is ready to give himself thus to you for your food and nourishment.

By way of preparation, turn your thoughts towards Jesus, and after a little reflection on the multitude of your sins, declare to him your sincere sorrow for them. Then beg of him, with the most profound respect and lively faith, that he will condescend to enter your heart, and replenish it with new grace, as a remedy against its weakness and the violence of its enemies. Every time you mortify any of your passions, or perform some act of virtue, take that opportunity of preparing your heart for the Son of God, who continually demands it of you; then addressing yourself to him, beg with great fervour the blessing of his presence as the physician of your soul, as a powerful protector to take and keep possession of your heart against all opponents.

Call likewise to mind your last sacramental communion, and inflamed with the love of your Saviour, say to him—When shall I receive thee again, O my God? When will the happy day return? But if you desire to communicate spiritually with greater devotion, begin to prepare for it over night; and let every

mortification and each act of virtue you practise, tend to prepare you for receiving in spirit your amiable Redeemer.

In the morning when you awake, meditate on the great advantages accruing from a holy communion, in which the soul retrieves lost virtues, recovers her former purity, is rendered worthy to partake of the merits of the cross; and performs an action highly pleasing to the Eternal Father, who desires that every one should enjoy this divine sacrament. From hence endeavour to excite in your soul an ardent desire of receiving him in compliance with his will; and with this disposition say—Lord, since I am not allowed to receive thee this day, sacramentally, let thy goodness and all-mighty power so order it, that, cleansed from the stain of sin, and healed of all my wounds, I may deserve to receive thee in spirit, now, ~~each~~ day and hour, to the end, that being strengthened with new grace, I may valiantly resist my enemies, especially that failing, against which, for the love of thee, I now wage war.

CHAPTER LVII.

Of Thanksgiving.

SINCE all the good we possess or perform, comes from God, and appertains to him, we are bound in justice to return continual thanks for every good action done, for every victory gained over ourselves; in fine, for all benefits, whether general or particular, received from his all bounteous hand. And in order to acquit ourselves in a proper manner of this duty, let us consider for what end he has thus heaped his blessings upon us. This will shew us in what manner he expects our acknowledgments should be made.

As his principal design in what he does for us, is to advance his own glory, and draw us to his service, let every one first make this reflection: What a proof have I in this benefit of God's infinite goodness, wisdom and power! Then considering, that of himself he cannot merit so great a favour, or rather, that through his black ingratitude he is altogether unworthy of it, let him say, with great humility—Is it possible, O Lord,

that thou shouldest have the least regard for the most abject of all thy creatures? What an excess of bounty, to heap thy favours on so wretched a sinner as myself! May thy holy name be forever blessed! In fine, as nothing more is required in return for so many signal benefits, but that he love and serve his benefactor, let him conceive the highest sentiments of gratitude and affection for so good a God, and the most earnest desires of a strict compliance with his holy will in all things. For a conclusion, he may make an entire offering of himself to God in the following manner.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Of the offering we are to make of ourselves to God.

TWO things are to be observed, if we desire to render this oblation pleasing to God. The one is, to join it with all the offerings which the Son of God made whilst on earth; the other is, to disengage our hearts from all affection for creatures.

As to the first, it must be observed

that our blessed Redeemer, during his mortal life, continually offered to the Eternal Father, not only himself but all his actions, mankind and all their good works. Let us, therefore, join our offerings with his, that from such an union they may be sanctified in the sight of the Almighty.

With regard to the second, let us be careful to break off all attachment to creatures, before we presume to offer this sacrifice of ourselves. Consequently, if we perceive we are still entangled in the least impure affection, let us have recourse to God, and conjure him to break asunder our bonds, that nothing may prevent our being entirely his. This is of very great importance. For if he who is a slave to creatures, pretends to give himself to God, does he not present that which is already engaged to another? This is mocking the Almighty. Hence it is, that though we may have many times thus offered ourselves as an holocaust, to the Lord, yet we have not only not advanced in the way of virtue, but even contracted fresh imperfections, and increased the number of our sins.

It is true, we may be allowed to make

this oblation to God, though our hearts be not entirely weaned from the world—but then it must be done with a serious view of creating a thorough aversion to it, and this being obtained, we may without the least obstacle devote ourselves to his service. Let, therefore, all our offerings be pure and unspotted; let not our own wills be consulted. Let us not regard the good things of this life, let us even overlook those of Heaven, and have nothing in view but the sole will of God; let us adore his Divine Providence, and implicitly submit to his appointments; let us sacrifice every affection of our souls to him, and, forgetting all created beings, let us say—Behold, O my God and my Creator, the offering I make of all that I am—I submit my will entirely to thine; dispose of me as thou pleasest as to life, death, here and hereafter, in time or in eternity.

If we say this sincerely from our hearts—if we are truly thus affected, which the first affliction that happens will plainly demonstrate, we may depend upon acquiring in a short time very great merits, of infinitely greater value than all this world can afford;

we shall belong to God, and he be ours, since he always bestows himself on those who renounce themselves and all creatures, that they may live for him alone. What powerful means must such a practice afford for defeating our enemies? For if by this voluntary sacrifice we unite ourselves so closely with God, that we are entirely his, and he be reciprocally ours, what enemy can have power to hurt us?

But, to enter into a farther detail, when we offer up our fasting, prayers, patience, or other good works, we must first call to mind the holy actions of the Son of God, and, placing all our confidence in their merit, present our own to the Eternal Father. But if we desire to offer to this Father of Mercy the sufferings of his Son, in satisfaction for our sins, it may be performed in the following manner:

We must call to mind either in general or in particular the chief disorders of our past lives; and being convinced, that of ourselves we are unable to appease the wrath of our Sovereign Judge, or make satisfaction to his offended justice, we must have recourse to the life and passion of our Saviour: We

must remember, that when he prayed, fasted, laboured, poured out his precious blood, he offered all he did and suffered to his father, in order to reconcile us to him. Behold, said he, how I comply with thy decrees, in satisfying thy justice for the sins of such and such : graciously grant them pardon, and receive them into the number of thy elect.

Every one ought to join his prayers with those of Jesus Christ, and conjure the Eternal Father to have mercy on him, through the merits of his Son's death and passion. This may be done every time we meditate on the life or passion of our Lord, not only in passing from one mystery to another, but also at the various circumstances of each mystery ; and this whether our prayers be offered up for ourselves or for others.

CHAPTER LIX.

Of sensible Devotion, and the affliction of Spiritual dryness.

SENSIBLE devotion arises either from a natural disposition, the artifices of the Devil, or is the effect of grace. From which of these sources it springs,

the effects will discover. For if no amendment follows, we have reason to fear the Devil or our corrupt nature is at the bottom of it; especially if too great a satisfaction is found in it, too great an attachment to it is indulged, or a better opinion of one's self entertained on its account. When therefore your heart abounds with joy and spiritual comfort, be not over solicitous to discover from whence it proceeds; but be exceedingly careful to lay no stress upon it, or cherish any better opinion of yourself; on the contrary, be ever mindful of your own nothingness, hate yourself the more, and break off all attachment to created objects, even spiritual ones, seeking God alone, and desiring to please only him. This conduct will change the very nature of the consolation you experience, and though it should at first arise from a bad principle, it will become an effect of grace.

Spiritual dryness proceeds from the causes we have just now mentioned. 1st. From the Devil, who sets all engines at work to make us negligent, to lead us out of the way of perfection, and plunge us afresh into the vanities of the world. 2nd. From the corruption of our nature, ever inclining us to evil, to

tepidity and sloth, and attaching our hearts to the good things of this life. 3d. From the Divine grace infused into our souls by the Holy Ghost, in order to wean us from every thing which is not God, or tends not to God; or else to convince us that we have nothing but what we receive from God to give us a greater relish for the gifts of Heaven—or to unite us still more to himself, by teaching us to renounce every thing else, even spiritual consolations, lest a too great fondness for them should divide our affections, which are due to him alone; or, because he delights in seeing us behave courageously, and make a right use of his holy graces.

When, therefore, you find yourself oppressed with a spiritual distaste and dryness, examine whether it be owing to any fault of yours, and amend it instantly; not so much with a view of regaining that sweetness, which is changed into bitterness, but in order to banish every thing that is in the least displeasing to God. But if, after an exact scrutiny, no such fault appears, give yourself no further concern for recovering the sensible devotion you have lost, but exert yourself in acquiring true de-

votion, which consists in an exact conformity with the will of God : desist not from your usual exercises, but, however barren and insipid they may appear, be resolute and persevere, drinking cheerfully the bitter cup your heavenly Father presents to you.

And if, besides this dryness, which makes you almost insensible to heavenly things, you likewise perceive your mind labouring under heavy clouds of spiritual darkness, and incapable of resolving upon any thing ; nevertheless be not discouraged, let nothing separate you from the cross of Christ, disdain all human consolation, vain and wretched as it is.

Be careful moreover not to discover this affliction to any but your spiritual physician, to whom it ought to be declared, not with a view to any alleviation, but in order to learn how to bear it with a perfect resignation to the Divine Will. Let not your communions, your prayers or other devout practices, be offered up for the freeing yourself from this cross ; but beg that your courage may, according to his example, fix you to it, for his greater glory, even to the end of your life.

But if your mind be so disquieted as to be incapable of praying and meditating as formerly, yet you must persist in those exercises with as little anxiety as possible, and supply the defects of the mind by the affection of the will; employ vocal prayer, and speak sometimes to yourself, sometimes to your Saviour. Such a practice of devotion will have surprising effects, and afford you great consolation in your troubles. On such occasions say to yourself—O my soul, why art thou thus dejected, and why dost thou give me so much uneasiness? Put thy confidence in God, for I will still sing his praises, because he is my Saviour and my God. Why art thou retired from me, O Lord? Why dost thou condemn me when I stand most in need of thy assistance? Abandon me not for ever! Psalm xlii. 51. Call to mind the pious sentiments with which the inspired Sarah, the wife of 'Toby, in affliction, and say with her in the same spirit, not only in mind but in deed—My God, all who serve thee, know that if they are visited with trials and affliction in this life, they will be rewarded; if oppressed with affliction, they shall be delivered; if punished by

thy justice, they hope in thy mercy. For thou delightest not in seeing us perish—Thou sendest a calm after storms, and joy after mourning. O God of Israel, be thy name for ever blessed. Toby iii. 21.

Represent to yourself your Saviour in the garden and on Mount Calvary, abandoned by him whose beloved and only Son he was; carry the cross with him, and say from the bottom of your heart—Not my will but thine be done. Thus by joining patience with prayer, you will acquire true devotion by the voluntary sacrifice you make of yourself to God. For, as I have said before, true devotion consists in a ready and resolute will to follow Christ loaded with his cross, wherever he is pleased to lead us; in loving God, because worthy of our love; and in quitting the sweetness of God for God's sake. And if numbers of those who profess piety, would bring spiritual advancement to be measured by this standard, rather than by the sweets of sensible devotion, they would not be so much deceived as they are by a false judgment of things, nor the artifices of the Devil; they would not be so very ungrateful as to murmur against their

Lord, and unjustly complain of the favour he does them, in giving opportunities for the exercise of their patience; on the contrary they would exert themselves in serving him with greater fidelity than ever, being persuaded that he permits every thing for the greater advancement of his own glory and our salvation.

There is another dangerous illusion, to which women especially are often exposed, who detest vice, and are assiduous in avoiding the occasions of sin: but if the unclean spirit molests them with wicked and abominable thoughts, or perhaps excites in their imagination horrible visions, they are dejected, and despond under the apprehension that God has forsaken them. They cannot conceive that the Holy Ghost will dwell in a soul filled with impure thoughts. Thus they abandon themselves to affliction, and a kind of despair; so that half conquered by the temptation, they begin to think of desisting from their exercises of devotion, and returning to Egypt; blind as they are, they see not God's goodness in permitting them to be tempted, in order to prevent their falling into any negligence, and to force

them by the effects of their own wretchedness, to unite themselves more closely with him. It is, therefore, the greatest ingratitude to complain of that, for which they ought to thank without ceasing the Divine mercy.

On such an occasion we ought to weigh well the perverse propensity of our corrupted nature. For God, who best knows what is for our advantage, would make us sensible, that of ourselves we tend to nothing but sin; and if not supported by him we should continually fall into the greatest of miseries. After this we must excite ourselves to a due confidence in his Divine mercy, being persuaded, that since he has been pleased to open our eyes to the danger we are in, he designs to free us from it, and unite us by prayer more strongly to himself. This deserves our most grateful acknowledgments.

But to return to those wicked thoughts which are involuntary; it is certain, that they are put to flight much sooner by a patient resignation to the anxiety they occasion, and a speedy application of the mind to something else, than by a tumultuous and violent resistance.

CHAPTER LX.

Of the examination of Conscience.

IN examining your conscience, three things are to be regarded. 1st. The faults committed that day. 2nd. The occasions of those faults. 3d. Your disposition to begin anew in amending your faults, and acquiring the contrary virtues. With regard to the faults committed that day; you are to recollect what I have directed to be done, Chapter 27, where you will find all that is to be performed after falling into sin. As to the occasions of sin, you must resolve to avoid them with the greatest caution and circumspection. Lastly, as to the amendment of these faults, and the acquisition of the requisite virtues, you must fortify your will by a firm confidence in God, by prayer and frequent earnest desires of breaking off all ill habits, and acquiring such as are commendable.

But if you find that you have gained some victory over yourself, or performed some good action, be upon your guard, beware of vain glory. I would

not even advise you to dwell too long on the remembrance of it, lest presumption and vanity take that time to steal into your heart. Leave, therefore, your good works, whatever they be, in the hands of the Divine mercy, and think of nothing but doing your duty with greater fervour for the future. Be mindful of giving God most humble thanks for the assistance you have received from him that day; acknowledge that all good comes from him; and in particular return thanks for his having defended you from numberless enemies, both visible and invisible; for the manifold good thoughts he bestowed, and the occasions offered of practising virtue; and for a thousand other benefits you cannot discover.

CHAPTER LXI.

In what manner we must persevere in the Spiritual Combat till death.

AMONG other things requisite for succeeding in the spiritual combat, perseverance is justly reckoned; a virtue through which we apply without ceasing to the destruction of our disorderly

inclinations, whose duration is the same with our lives, never failing to shoot up and spread in our hearts, like rank weeds in a fertile soil. It is in vain to think of putting an end to this war, it cannot end but at our deaths, and whoever ceaseth to fight, must give up his liberty or life. Alas! how should he avoid being overcome, when attacked by enemies devoted to his utter destruction, and whose malice increases the more this friendship is sought? Nevertheless, be not daunted with their strength and number, for in this sort of fight no one is conquered but he that surrenders; neither have your enemies a greater power than your leader, for whose honour you engage, is pleased to allow them. Be assured he never will suffer you to fall into their hands; he will be your champion, he who is infinitely superior to them all, will crown you with conquest, provided that fighting his battles, you place your confidence, not in your own strength, but in his all-mighty power and sovereign goodness.

But if he seems slow in succouring you, if he permits you to be exposed to danger, yet be not discouraged; let

your faith be steadfast, and with the following consideration animate yourself to the combat; believe, I say, that he will so order every thing, that all which seems an obstacle to your glory will turn out to your advantage. For your part, let your resolution and fidelity be seen; never desert your leader, who for your sake did not shrink from death itself, and by dying conquered the world; fight courageously under his standard, and quit not your arms while there is one enemy left. For if you spare but one, if but a single vice is neglected, it will ever be an eye-sore, an arrow fixed in your breast; and as it will encumber you in the fight, it will consequently retard your victory.

CHAPTER LXII.

In what manner we must prepare for engaging those Enemies by whom we shall be attacked at the hour of death.

ALTHOUGH this mortal life be a continual warfare, yet it is very certain, that the last day of battle will be the most dangerous; for he who loses that decisive day has nothing left to trust to.

In order, therefore, not to perish at that juncture without resource, endeavour to inure yourself to the combat, while God gives you opportunities; for he that fights valiantly during life, will gain the victory in his last moments, through his accustomed conquests in the fiercest assaults.

Besides, think frequently on death, for that will much diminish the terror of it when at hand; your mind will be more at liberty, and better prepared for the combat. Worldlings banish this thought as troublesome and unseasonable, lest it should destroy the pleasures this life affords; and being unwilling to entertain so vexatious a reflection, as that which tells them they must one day part with all they now hold so dear. Thus their affections are more strongly riveted to this world every day. And thence it comes, that the leaving this life, and all that is dear to them, is a torture the more insupportable, the longer they have enjoyed such delights.

But in order to be prepared for that terrible passage from time to eternity, imagine yourself sometimes all alone, no assistance to be had, and the agonies of death pressing upon you; consider

attentively the following particulars, which will give you the most uneasiness, and imprint deep in your mind the remedies I shall propose, that you may employ them when the time of extremity is at hand ; for it is absolutely necessary to know that lesson well, which is to be performed but once, lest an irreparable fault be committed, and an eternity of misery be the consequence.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Of four kinds of temptations usual at the hour of death : And first, of those against Faith, and the manner of resisting them.

THE enemies of our salvation generally assault us at the hour of death with four kinds of dangerous temptations. 1st. With doubts against faith. 2d. With thoughts of despair. 3d. With thoughts of vain glory. 4th. With various illusions employed by these ministers of darkness, transformed into angels of light for our destruction.

As to the first sort, if the enemy should offer any captious and fallacious argument, be sure not to enter into any

dispute with him ; let it suffice to say to him, with a holy indignation—Be-gone, Satan, father of lies—I will not hear thee ; my belief is no other than that of the holy Roman Catholic Church.

Be likewise on your guard against any thoughts which may offer themselves as conducing to strengthen your faith ; reject them as suggestions of the Devil, who seeks to disturb you, by insensibly engaging you in a dispute. But if you cannot free yourself from such thoughts, and your head is full of them, still be resolute, listen not to his arguments, not even to those passages of Scripture he may possibly allege. For however clear and direct they may seem, yet he will certainly quote them wrong, maim or misapply them.

If, therefore, the fiend should ask you what the Church believes, make no reply, but as you know his design is to surprise you, and wrangle on some ambiguous word, content yourself with making one general act of faith ; or, if you are desirous to mortify him still more, answer, that the Church believes the truth ; if he presses to know what is the truth, tell him it is what the Church believes. Take especial care

that your heart be inseparable from the cross, and say to the Son of God—O my Creator and Redeemer! come immediately to my assistance, and depart not from me, lest I wander from the truth thou hast taught me; and since thou hast favoured me with being a member of thy church, grant I may die such to thy greater glory.

CHAPTER LXIV.

Of temptations to Despair, and how they are to be resisted.

THE second temptation which the enemy throws in our way, is a vain terror which he endeavours to strike into us, and make us despair at the sight of our past sins. If you perceive yourself in any danger of this kind, take it as a general rule, that the remembrance of former crimes proceeds from the Divine grace, and is salutary, if it tends to form in you sentiments of humility, compunction, and confidence in God's mercy. But know, likewise, that it certainly is suggested by the Devil as often as it creates vexation and despondency; leaving you spiritless and daunt-

ed, from the strong reasons it offers to make you believe you are lost without any hopes of salvation.

Think of nothing, in such circumstances, but of humbling yourself, and placing a greater confidence than ever in the boundless mercy of our Lord: this will entirely defeat the Devil's stratagem, as it turns his own weapons against him, and gives greater glory to God. It is true, you ought to be truly contrite for having offended such sovereign goodness, as often as you call to mind your past iniquities; but you ought at the same time to ask pardon with a firm confidence in your Saviour's merits. Even though it seems as if God said in your heart, you are not of the number of his flock, still you must not cease to hope in him, saying with great humility—Lord thou hast too much reason to reject me and punish my sins to all eternity; but still I have greater reason to hope thou wilt manifest thy mercy in me. I beseech thee, therefore, to spare a miserable wretch, who deserves, indeed, to be forever banished from thee, but yet is the dear purchase of thy precious blood. I desire to be saved, O blessed Redeemer, that I may

bleſs thee for ever in thy glory—all my hopes are in thee—to thee do I abandon myſelf entirely—diſpoſe of me as thou pleaſeſt, who art my ſovereign Maſter; diſpoſe, I ſay, as thou pleaſeſt—but however that be, I will hope in thee, though thou ſhouldeſt condemn me this very inſtant.

CHAPTER LXV.

Of temptation to Vain Glory.

THE third kind of temptation is vain glory. Dread nothing ſo much as giving the leaſt way to an opinion of yourſelf and your good works. Take no glory but in our Lord, and acknowledge that all is due to the merits of his life and death. To the utmoſt verge of life, look upon yourſelf only with hatred and contempt: let your humility increaſe every moment, and never ceaſe giving thanks to God, as the author of all the good you have ever done. Beſeech him to ſuccour you; but beware of eſteeming his aſſiſtance to be the reward of your merits, even though you may have gained the moſt ſignal victories over yourſelf. Be ever in fear, and confeſs inge-

nuously, that all your endeavours would be vain, unless God, in whom is all your hope, crowns them with success. Follow this advice, and rest secure that your enemies cannot hurt you.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Of various Illusions employed by the Devil at the hour of our death.

IF the enemy of our salvation, who never ceases to persecute us, should, under the appearance of an angel of light, endeavour to deceive you with illusions, imaginary or even real visions, still remain firm in the knowledge of yourself, and say boldly to him—Avaunt, wretched Fiend—return to thy dark abodes from whence thou camest; for I am too great a sinner to deserve visions; I seek nothing but the mercy of my Jesus, the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the other Saints.

But if it appears almost evidently that such things are from God, be sure you do not too easily give them credit; be not afraid of rejecting them; such resistance, founded as it is on a sense of your own wretchedness, must be highly

acceptable to God; and if he is the author of what you experience, he will not fail to convince you that it is so, without any detriment to you; since he that gives his grace to the humble, will not deprive them of it, when they humble themselves before him.

Such are the weapons the enemy usually employs against us in general, when our last moments draw near; but besides this, he attacks each one in particular where he knows they are least able to resist. He studies our inclinations, and through them draws us into sin. Wherefore, before the hour of the great combat approaches, let us take arms and make war on our prevailing passions, that we may with less difficulty resist and conquer them in the time, which will be to us the last of all time. Ye shall fight against them, till they be utterly destroyed. 3 Kings xv.

THE
PEACE OF THE SOUL,
AND THE
HAPPINESS OF THE HEART,
WHICH DIES TO ITSELF
IN ORDER TO LIVE TO GOD.

CHAPTER I.

Of the nature of Man's Heart, and the manner of governing it.

GOD created the heart of man to no other end than to love him, and be beloved by him again. The excellence of this end of the creation ought to convince us that it is the most noble and most excellent work of his all-mighty hand.

On the government of this alone, depends our spiritual life and death.

The art of governing it must needs be very easy, since its true character is to act through love, and to do nothing by force.

All we have to do is to watch, with great calmness, the true spirit of our actions.

To observe from whence they spring and whither they tend.

Whether they are actuated by the heart, the source of Divine love; or by the understanding, from whence arises human vain glory.

You will discover that it is the heart which influences you in your good works, through a motive of love, when all you do for God seems little, and after doing your very best, you are ashamed of having done so little.

But you may conclude, that your actions proceed from the understanding, moved by worldly motives, when your good works, instead of producing meek and humble sentiments, leave nothing behind them but the empty illusions of vain glory, puffing you up with a false notion of having performed wonders, when in fact you have done nothing that is praiseworthy.

Man's warfare, mentioned by Job, consists in watching thus continually over ourselves.

This is to be performed without the least peevishness or anxiety; for what

is aimed at, is to give peace to the soul, to calm and appease its motions, when troubled or disturbed in its operations or prayers. For we may be assured, in such a condition, prayers will be very indifferently said, till the soul be freed from all uneasiness.

Know that this may be effected by a single emotion of mildness, which is the only means of remedying this disorder and restoring her former tranquillity.

CHAPTER II.

How careful the soul ought to be in acquiring Perfect Tranquillity.

THIS mild, peaceable, and especially constant attention to all the motions of the heart, will easily produce wonderful effects ; for we shall not only pray and act with great facility and peace, but even suffer, without repining, what occasions the greatest disturbances, contempt and injuries themselves.

Not but that to acquire this external peace we must necessarily undergo much labour, and our want of experience will expose us to the assaults of powerful domestic enemies. But this we may

depend upon, that if we are not afraid of the encounter, we never shall want assistance and consolation in this combat; that our enemies will grow weaker and their powers be dispersed, whereas our command over our affections will increase, and we shall procure for our souls that precious repose, in which their happiness on this side the grave alone consists.

If it should happen that the emotion be too strong to be assuaged, or the weight of affliction too heavy to be borne, let us have recourse to prayer; let us pray, and this without ceasing. Jesus prayed three times in the garden, to teach us that prayer is the refuge and solace of every afflicted mind.

Let us pray continually, till we find all quiet within our breasts—our will submissive to that of Heaven, and our soul restored to its former tranquillity.

Let us not suffer ourselves to be disturbed by any hurry of business: whenever our minds or bodies are at work, let it be done with all sedateness and composure, not tasking ourselves to a fixed time, or being too eager to see it finished.

One principal intention ought to pre-

side over all our actions, that is, to be ever mindful of God's holy presence, with great humility and peace, only solicitous how to please him.

If we suffer any other consideration to interfere, our souls will soon abound with disquiet and anxiety; we shall often fall, and the difficulty of recovering ourselves, will convince us, that all our evils proceed from acting on all occasions in compliance with our own will and humour; and which likewise, when success attends us, fills us with vain satisfaction; and when disappointed, leaves us overwhelmed with uneasiness, trouble and vexation.

CHAPTER III.

That this peaceable habitation must be built by degrees.

BANISH from your mind whatever may tend to elevate, depress, or discompose it; endeavour with great mildness to acquire or preserve its peace; for Jesus Christ hath said—Blessed are the peaceable—learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Doubt not that God will crown your labour, and

make your soul a dwelling of delight—all he asks of you is, that as often as the emotions of your senses and passions molest you, you would speedily endeavour to disperse the clouds, to calm and appease the storms, and make peace once more smile on all your actions.

As a house cannot be built at once, so is not this acquisition of interior treasure to be made in an instant.

But the perfection of this work depends essentially on two things—the one is, that the hand of God himself prepares his habitation in you; the other, that humility be the foundation of the building.

CHAPTER IV.

That to attain this peace, the Soul must relinquish all human consolation.

THE path which leads to this peace, incapable of being disturbed, is almost unknown to the world. In it, tribulation is as earnestly sought as pleasure is by worldlings; there, contempt and derision are pursued, as honours and glory are by ambitious men; there, as great pains are taken to neglect and be

neglected, to forsake and be forsaken by all men, as the children of this world take to be sought for, caressed and esteemed by kings and princes.

But there the holy ambition, with all humility, is to be known, regarded, comforted and favoured by God alone.

The Christian soul learns there to converse only with God, and to be so strongly fortified by his presence, that she is willing to suffer every thing for his sake, and to promote his glory.

There, is learnt that suffering blots out sin, and that an affliction supported in a proper manner is a treasure laid up for eternity; and that to suffer with Jesus Christ ought to be the only ambition of a soul which seeks the glory of resembling him.

There, is taught, that to love ourselves, to follow one's own will, to obey our sensual appetites, and to destroy ourselves, is one and the same thing.

That our own will is not even to be indulged in what is commendable, till we have submitted it to that of God in all simplicity and humility of heart; that what his divine Majesty appoints, and not our inclinations, may be the rule of our actions.

We often perform good works from wrong motives, or through our indiscreet zeal, which, like a false prophet, appears to be an innocent lamb, but in reality is a ravenous wolf.

But the devout soul will discover the illusion by its fruits. When she finds herself in trouble and anxiety, her humility diminished, her composure disturbed; when she no longer enjoys her peace and tranquillity, and sees that all she had attained with much time and labour, is vanished in an instant.

We may sometimes fall in this road, but this serves only to increase our humility, which assists us to recover, and to watch more strictly over ourselves for the future.

Perhaps God permits us to fall, in order to root out some secret pride our self-love hides from us.

The soul may sometimes be molested with temptations to sin, but she must not disturb herself on this account, she must withdraw quietly from them, without solicitude, and reinstate herself in her former tranquillity, without indulging either joy or sorrow to excess.

In a word, all we have to do is this, to keep our souls in peace and purity

in the sight of God, we shall find him in our own breasts, and know by experience that his will appoints every thing for our greater good.

CHAPTER V.

That the soul ought to keep herself in solitude and disengaged, that God's holy will may operate in her.

IF we are sensible how great a value we ought to set upon our souls, a temple designed for the habitation of God; let us take care that nothing of this world intrude itself there, placing our hope in the Lord, and waiting with a firm confidence his coming; he will certainly enter if he finds it alone and disengaged; alone, having no desire but of his presence; alone, loving only him. In fine, alone, void of all other will but that of Heaven.

Let us do nothing to please ourselves, that we may merit the presence of him who surpasses the comprehension of all created beings.

Let us follow exactly the steps of our guide; let us not, without his advice,

embrace either suffering or good works to offer to God.

It suffices to keep our minds ever ready and willing to suffer, for love of him, what he pleases, and how he pleases.

Whoever acts of his own accord, would do better to remain in peace, attentive to what the Divine Majesty shall perform in him.

We must not suffer our will to entertain any engagement, but to be always free.

And since we ought not to act according to our desires, let us be persuaded not to desire any thing; or if we do, let it be in such a manner, that in case of disappointment, our minds be as undisturbed as if we had desired nothing.

Our desires are our chains, to be entangled with them is to be slaves—but to have none, or not to be subject to them is to be free.

God demands our souls, alone, void of all engagements, that he may manifest his wonders in them, and in a manner glorify them in this life. O holy Solitude! O happy Desert! O glorious Hermitage, where the Soul may so easily

enjoy its God ! Let us not only run thither, but beg the wings of the dove, that we may fly to it, and find a holy repose ; let us not stop by the way, let us not lose time in frivolous discourse with any one ; let us leave the dead to bury their dead, we fly to the land of the living, and have nothing to do with death.

CHAPTER VI.

That Prudence must guide our love of our Neighbour, that it may not disturb the peace of our Souls.

GOD dwells not in a soul which he does not inflame with a love of himself, and charity for others ; Christ said, he came to set the world on fire.

The love of God must have no bounds, but charity for our neighbour must have its limits. We cannot love God too much, but we may exceed in the love of others—for if it be not duly regulated, it may prove our ruin—we may destroy ourselves in seeking to save others. Let us, therefore, love our neighbour in such a manner as not to hurt our own souls ; this is best secured when we do nothing

with the sole view of setting them a good example, as models for their imitation, lest in endeavouring to save them, we throw ourselves away ; let us perform our actions with great simplicity and sanctity, and with the sole view of pleasing God, humbling ourselves and acknowledging, that as our good works contribute so little to our own advantage, they can be of little service to others. It is not required of us to be so zealous for the salvation of others, as to destroy the peace of our own souls.

We may have that ardent thirst for their illumination, when God shall please to give it us ; but we must wait for it from his hand, and not vainly imagine it is to be acquired by our solicitude and indiscreet zeal. Let us secure to our souls the peace and repose of a holy solitude ; such is the will of God in order to bind and attach us to himself : let us remain recollected within ourselves, till the Master of the vineyard hires us ; God will clothe us with himself, when he finds us stripped and divested of all earthly solicitude : he will be mindful of us, when we have entirely forgot ourselves ; peace will reign in our breasts, and his divine love will put us

in action without disquiet, will give moderation and temperance to our motions, and thus we shall perform every thing in the holy repose of that peace of love in which even silence is eloquent; and to hold ourselves free, and susceptible of God's operations, is to do every thing. For it is his divine goodness which must work in us and with us, without requiring any more of us, than with great humility to present him a soul, void of every desire but this one, that his holy will be accomplished in her, in the most perfect manner possible.

CHAPTER VII.

That our souls must be divested entirely of their own will, in order to be presented to God.

COME to me all ye that labour and are oppressed, if ye would rest from your toil; and all ye that thirst, if ye would be refreshed. Such are the words of Christ in two places in the Scripture; let us follow this Divine summons, but without violence or precipitation, in peace and mildness, referring ourselves with great respect and confidence to the

endearing all-mighty Power which calls upon us.

Let us wait in the spirit of peace, the coming of that spirit which gives peace; let us think of nothing but the means by which he may be desired, loved and glorified, entirely resigned and obedient to what he shall appoint.

We must not use violence with our heart, lest if it should prove stubborn, it be rendered incapable of that holy repose we are commanded to acquire.

But let us accustom it by degrees to contemplate nothing else except the goodness, love, and benefits which God exercises towards his creatures, and to nourish itself with that delightful manna, which a frequency of such meditations will shower down upon our souls with unspeakable sweetness.

Let us not strive to shed tears, nor to excite sentiments of devotion which we have not: our hearts must repose in God, as in their centre, and we need never despair of the will of God being accomplished in us.

He will bestow on us the gift of tears when it is proper, but then they will be mild, humble, affectionate and peaceable: by these marks you will discover

the source from whence they spring, and receive them as dew from Heaven, with all humility, reverence and gratitude.

Let us not presume to know, to have, nor to desire any thing: the beginning and end, the corner stone and key of the spiritual building, is not to depend in the least on ourselves, on what we know, what we desire, or what we possess; but remaining in a state of perfect self-denial, like Magdalen at the feet of Jesus, without busying ourselves like Martha.

When you seek God by the light of your understanding, to repose in him, it must be done without comparing him to any thing, without bounds or limits; for he is beyond all comparison, he is every where without division, and contains all things in himself.

Conceive an immensity without limits; a whole which cannot be comprehended; a Power which has made and still supports all things, and then say to your soul, behold thy God.

Contemplate and admire him without ceasing. He is every where, he is in your soul, in her he places his delight, as he has declared; and although he stands not in need of her, he is pleased to make her worthy of himself.

But in searching after these divine truths by your understanding, let them be the resting place of the mild and peaceable affections of your will.

You are neither to neglect nor limit your devotions, tying yourself down to so many prayers, so much reading or meditation ; but let your heart be at liberty to stop where it finds a resting place, and always ready to enjoy its Lord, whenever he pleases to communicate himself to you, without being in any concern for not having finished what you had begun ; abandon the rest without scruple, taking no thought on this subject ; because the end of your devotion being to enjoy God, as that is accomplished, the means are of no farther signification for the present.

God leads us by that way which he has chosen, and if we oblige ourselves to such or such particular exercises which we fancy, and thus lay imaginary obligations on ourselves, we expect to find God when we are in reality running from him ; we pretend to please him without conforming to his will, and put ourselves out of a condition of being disposed of according to his pleasure.

If you desire to advance in this path with success, and attain the end to which

it leads, seek and desire God alone wherever you find him, there stop, go no farther; whilst he is pleased to remain with you, enjoy in his company the repose of Saints; and when his Divine Majesty pleases to retire, then you may by pursuing your devotions, endeavour to find him again, earnestly desiring to succeed; which when done, you are to abandon every thing, that you may the more perfectly enjoy him.

This advice is of the greatest importance, and well deserves our attention in practising it; for we see many churchmen, who waste themselves with the fatigues of their employments, without reaping any advantage or repose for themselves; because they imagine they have done nothing, if they leave their task unfinished, wherein they place perfection; they act like journeymen, bound to obey the dictates of their own will, but never attain true interior peace, the dwelling of the Lord and sanctuary of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the faith we ought to have in regard of the Blessed Sacrament, and how we are to offer ourselves to God.

OUR faith and love in regard of the holy Eucharist must continually increase, growing stronger every day, and become naturalized to us.

Let us approach it with a will prepared to undergo all afflictions, tribulations, weakness, and spiritual dryness, for his holy sake.

We must not ask him to change himself into us, but that we may be changed into him.

Let us not entertain him with pompous speeches; admiration and joy ought to engage our souls, and swallow up all their functions when he is present; our understanding must be employed in admiring this incomprehensible mystery, and our heart melt away with joy at the sight of such immense Majesty under such simple veils.

Let us not desire him to manifest himself to us, remembering that he hath declared, blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.

Above all let us be constant and punctual in our devotions, and continually practise those means which will most contribute to purify and adorn our souls with a peaceable and mild simplicity.

While these methods are pursued, the grace of perseverance will never be wanting to us.

A soul which has once tasted this spiritual repose, can never return to the hurry of a worldly life; it is impossible she should ever bear the torment of it.

CHAPTER IX.

That the soul ought not to seek either repose or pleasure but in God.

A SOUL which relishes nothing this world affords, but its persecutions and disgraces; which neither loves nor desires any thing it can bestow, nor dreads all it can inflict; which flies the former as a deadly poison, and covets the latter as the greatest delight; such a soul, I say, may expect all consolation from God, provided her whole confidence is in him, without presuming the least on her own strength. The cou-

rage of St. Peter was very great, when he declared his resolution of dying with Christ; such a fixed will was in all appearance very commendable, but in reality was very defective in being his own will, which was the occasion of his shameful fall; so true it is, that we can neither propose nor execute any good, unless supported by the all-mighty power of God.

Let us preserve our souls entirely free from all desires, that nothing may impede her operations, ever present in all she does or thinks, not suffering any concern of what she has to do or resolve on, except in the present instant, to give her the least disturbance.

Nevertheless, every one is to apply himself to his temporal affairs with a prudent and commendable solicitude, suitable to what his state of life requires; such business rightly managed, is according to the divine appointment, and does not interfere with our internal peace and spiritual advancement.

We can do nothing better towards rightly employing the time present, than to offer our soul, entirely divested of all desires, to all-mighty God, and standing before him, like a weak languishing

wretch, incapable of doing any thing for himself.

In this freedom of mind, disengaged within, and depending altogether on God, consists the very essence of perfection.

It is impossible to conceive how tender the divine goodness is of those who are thus entirely devoted to it.

It is pleased with their showing a confidence without reserve; it delights in enlightening them, in resolving their difficulties, in raising them when fallen, and forgiving their offences as often as they are truly penitent; for God is still the priest for ever, and though he has given to St. Peter and his successors the power of loosing and binding, he has not divested himself of the same; so that if these cannot have recourse to their confessors as often as they desire, the Divine Majesty receives them to his mercy, pardoning their sins whenever they approach him with due confidence, a perfect sorrow, and an entire love. Such are the fruits of this holy disengagement.

CHAPTER X.

That we ought not to be dejected at the obstacles and repugnance we find in attaining this Interior Peace.

GOD is often pleased to permit this interior serenity, this solitude of the soul, this peace and holy repose of heart, to be disturbed and overcast with the clouds and emotions arising from our self-love and natural inclinations.

But as his goodness permits it for our greater good, he will not fail to bestow the refreshing showers of his divine consolation on this dryness, which will not only lay the dust, but enrich it with fruits and flowers worthy the regard of his Divine Majesty.

These interruptions of our tranquillity, occasioned by the emotions of our sensitive appetites, are those very combats in which the saints have gained victories worthy of immortal crowns.

Whenever you fall into such weaknesses, disgusts, troubles and desolations of mind, say to God with an humble and affectionate heart—Lord, I am the work of thy own hands, and the

slave redeemed by thy precious blood ; dispose of me as entirely thine, made for thee alone, and permit me only to hope in thee. Thrice happy soul, who thus offers itself to God in time of affliction !

And though perhaps you cannot immediately bend your will to an entire submission to God, you must not be dejected ; it is your cross which he commands you to take up and follow him. Did not he carry one, to shew you how you ought to behave ? Contemplate the combat he underwent in the garden ; when he struggled with his human nature, whose weakness made him cry out—Father, if it be possible let me not drink of this cup ; and his soul rising above the weakness of the body, immediately subjoined, with a most profound humility—Let not my will but thine be done.

Perhaps the weakness of nature may make you avoid all trouble or affliction, and when it happens, you may shew your dislike, and wish it at a distance.

But notwithstanding, be sure you persevere in prayer and acts of humility, till you find no other desire nor inclination, but that the will of God be accomplished in you.

Endeavour that God alone may dwell in your heart, that there be no room for bitterness, gall, or voluntary repugnance to what God shall appoint; never look upon or consider the failings of others, but pursue your own way, regarding nothing but how to avoid what may hurt your conscience; the great secret of belonging entirely to God, is to neglect and pass by every thing else.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the artifices employed by the Devil to disturb the peace of our souls, and how we may defeat them.

THE enemy of mankind endeavours chiefly to withdraw us from a state of humility and Christian simplicity.

To effect this he inclines us to presume a little on ourselves above others, which is soon followed by a contempt of them for some supposed failing.

He steals into our souls by some of these means; but his greatest inclination is to enter them by the door of vanity and self-love.

The art of defeating him, is to keep closely entrenched in holy humility, ne-

ver forsaking it in the least ; to confound and annihilate ourselves ; if we abandon that state, we shall never defend ourselves against that proud spirit, who, if he once gets possession of our will, is sure to play the tyrant, and introduce every vice into our souls.

Neither will it suffice to watch, we must also pray ; for it is said, watch and pray. Peace of mind is a treasure which cannot be secured, unless thus guarded.

Let us not suffer our minds to be afflicted or disturbed on any account whatever. The humble and peaceable soul does every thing with great facility ; before her all obstacles vanish ; her conduct is holy, and she perseveres in it : but the soul which suffers herself to be disquieted, performs few good actions, and those very imperfect ones, is soon weary, continually suffers, but her sufferings are of no advantage.

You will discern whether thoughts ought to be encouraged or banished, by the confidence or diffidence they inspire to be placed in the Divine mercy : If they dictate that this affectionate confidence ought to increase continually, you are to look upon them as messen-

gers from Heaven, entertain and take a delight in them ; but you must reject and banish, as the suggestions of Hell itself, all such as tend to make you in the least diffident of his infinite goodness.

The Tempter of pious souls often magnifies their failings ; he endeavours to persuade that they do not comply with their duties ; that their confessions are imperfect, their communions tepid, their prayers deficient ; and thus with various scruples he keeps them in perpetual alarms, seeking to draw them from their exercises, as if God did not regard, or had entirely forgot them ; than all which nothing can be more false : for the advantages arising from distractions, spiritual dryness, and the like are very numerous, provided the soul comprehends and complies with what God expects of her in those circumstances, that she exercise her patience, and persevere in her good works ; for the prayers and exercises of a soul, deprived of all satisfaction in what she does, is the delight of the Almighty, according to St. Gregory ; especially, if notwithstanding she is cold, insensible, and as it were absent from what she

does, yet she persists in it with courage, her patience prays sufficiently for her, and will prevail more with God, than any prayers said with the greatest sensible devotion. The same saint adds, that the interior darkness with which her devotion is surrounded, shines bright in the presence of God, that nothing we do can sooner draw him to us, and even compels him to bestow new graces upon us.

Never quit, therefore, any work of piety, how little relish soever you may possibly find in it, unless you would comply with what the Devil desires; and learn from the following chapter, the great advantages which may be reaped through an humble perseverance in works of piety, when attended with the most irksome spiritual barrenness.

CHAPTER XII.

That our Souls must not be afflicted at Internal Temptations.

THE fruits which spring from spiritual barrenness, and even from faults committed in our devotions, are certainly very great; but it is only through

humility and patience, that we reap the benefit of them: were we thoroughly masters of this secret, we should prevent many uneasy days and unhappy hours.

Alas! how mistaken are we in thinking ourselves forsaken and abhorred by God Almighty, from the precious tokens of his Divine love, and to fancy his anger punishes us when we are highly favoured by his goodness. Don't we see that the uneasiness which arises from such interior barrenness can only spring from a desire of being altogether acceptable to God, zealous and fervent in what regards his service, since what afflicts us is nothing but a want of such sentiments, from whence we imagine we displease God, as much as we are displeasing to ourselves: No, no, we may be assured that it is a good effect from a good cause; such trials never happening but to those who desire to live like the faithful servants of God; avoiding not only what may offend, but even what may be disagreeable to him.

On the contrary, we seldom hear great sinners, or even those who live according to the maxims of this world, complain of such kind of temptations.

It is a remedy, not very palatable indeed, and such as we are apt to set ourselves against, but of wonderful efficacy, though we do not perceive it: Let the temptation be dreadful, even to that degree as to terrify us with the bare thought of it, the greater our affliction and humiliation, the greater advantage we shall reap. This the soul does not comprehend, and therefore declines a path which presents nothing but crosses and afflictions.

Which is as much as to say, she is unwilling to be deprived of delight and consolation, and that whatever is not attended with such sweetness, she esteems no better than lost labour.

CHAPTER XIII.

That God sends these Temptations for our good.

WE are naturally proud, ambitious, and indulgent to our senses; hence it is we are apt to flatter ourselves on all occasions, and set a much greater value on what belongs to us than we deserve.

But such presumption is so great an obstacle to our spiritual progress,

that the least tincture of it, though never so small, will hinder us from attaining true perfection.

It is an evil undiscernible by us, but God, who knows its nature and loves us, is ever careful to undeceive us, to wake us from the lethargy of self-love, and bring us to a true knowledge of ourselves. Did he not deal thus with St. Peter, when he permitted that apostle to deny him, and forswear any knowledge of his Lord, that he might return to the knowledge of himself, and lay aside his dangerous presumption? Did he not likewise deal in the same manner with St. Paul, when in order to secure him from this bane of our souls, and from making a wrong use of the sublime Revelations with which he had been favoured, he was exposed to a shameful temptation, which continually reminded him of his own weakness?

Let us admire the goodness and wisdom of God, who thus opposes us for our good, and highly favours us when we least perceive it, even when we imagine he hurts us.

We are apt to think this tepidity arises from our imperfections and insensibility in regard of God; we are easily

persuaded that no one is so distracted and forsaken as ourselves; that God has no such wretched servants as we are; that none but miscreants have their minds filled with thoughts like ours.

Thus, by the effects of this heavenly Medicine, is this presumptuous person, who had so good an opinion of himself, brought to think no one so bad, or so unworthy the name of Christian.

Would he ever have descended from those lofty sentiments to which his pride had raised him? Would he have been ever cured of his haughtiness? Would such fumes of vanity ever have been banished his head and heart without this remedy?

Neither is humility the only advantage we receive from such kind of temptations, afflictions, and interior desolations, which leave the soul thus desolate, and deprive it of all the sensible delights of devotion; for besides, they compel us to have recourse to God, to fly every thing displeasing to him, and to apply ourselves with greater diligence to the practice of virtue. Such afflictions are a kind of purgatory, which cleanse us, and bring crowns of glory, when received with humility and patience.

The soul being convinced of what has been said above, may judge whether she ought to lose her peace, and grieve at being deprived of a relish for devotion, and surrounded with interior temptations; whether it be reasonable to attribute to the malice of the Devil, what comes from the hand of God, and to mistake the tokens of his tenderness for marks of his indignation.

All she has to do on such an occasion, is to humble herself in the sight of God, to persevere and bear with patience the disgust she finds in her exercises of devotion, conform herself to the Divine will, and endeavour to preserve her tranquillity, by humbly acquiescing to what he is pleased to appoint, since it is the will of our Father who is in Heaven.

Instead of shrinking with sorrow and dejection, she ought to break forth into fresh acts of thanksgiving, establishing herself in peace and submission to the appointments of Heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

How we are to behave with regard to our Faults.

IF it should happen that you commit a fault in word or deed, give way to anger, interrupt your devotions out of some vain curiosity, indulge immoderate joy, entertain suspicious thoughts of your neighbour, or are guilty of any other failing, even often, though it be the same fault, and such as you have resolved against; you must not be disquieted, nor let what has passed make too deep an impression, so as to afflict and deject you, fancying you shall never amend, that you do not perform your exercises in a due manner, or that if you did, such faults would not be so often repeated; for all this is an affliction of spirit, and a loss of time which you ought avoid.

Neither ought you to dwell too long in sifting the several circumstances of your fault, whether it was indulged for any time, whether you fully consented to it or not; because all this only serves to fill your mind with vexations, both

before and after confession, as if you could never say enough, nor in the manner it should be expressed.

You would not be so much molested with these vexations, were you well apprized of your own weakness and how you ought to behave in regard of God Almighty after committing such faults. Not with anxiety and dejection of mind, which only disturbs and sinks the spirits; but by turning to him with great humility and affection; and this is to be understood not only of smaller failings, but likewise of great faults; not only of such as are occasioned by sloth and indevotion, but even through malice itself.

This is not sufficiently understood by many; for instead of practising this great lesson of filial confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, their spirits are so wasted that they are almost incapable of thinking of any good, and lead a wretched languishing life, by preferring their own weak imaginations to sound wholesome doctrine.

CHAPTER XV.

That the Soul should recover her Tranquillity, and not lose time with every vexation which happens.

LET, therefore, this be your rule as often as you are guilty of any fault, great or small, though repeated many times the same day, as soon as you perceive what you have done, to consider your own weakness and have recourse to God with an humble heart, saying to him with a calm and amiable confidence: Thou hast seen, O my God, that I did what I could: Thou seest what I am, sin can produce nothing but sin: As thou hast given me grace to repent, I beseech thy goodness to add to my pardon the grace never to offend thee more. This prayer being finished, spend no time in anxious thoughts whether God has pardoned you or not, but with great humility and calmness proceed in your devotions, without reflecting any farther on what has happened, exciting the same confidence and tranquillity of mind as before. And this method is to be observed as often as the

fault is repeated, though it were a thousand times, after the last time as well as after the first; for besides, that, thus we return immediately to God, who like a tender father is always ready to receive us as often as we come to him, we likewise avoid losing time in vexation and solicitude, which only discomposes the mind and prevents its resuming its usual calmness and fidelity.

I heartily wish that those who disquiet themselves and grow disconsolate on their committing faults, would study well this spiritual secret; they would soon comprehend how different their state is from an humble cheerful mind, where peace and tranquillity reigns, and how prejudicial to their souls the loss of so much time in anxiety must necessarily be.

THOUGHTS ON DEATH.

EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES WE STAND ON THE
BRINK OF ETERNITY.

*Twelve advantages arising from the
contemplation of Death.*

1st. IT enables us to judge properly, and prevents our being imposed on in all affairs. *Vera Philosophia.*

Naked we were born, and naked we leave this world, why then should we scrape up riches?

No one to accompany us—to what purpose then are we so fond of creatures?

The stench and corruption of our carcasses, which will only serve to pamper worms and vermin in the grave, cures us of the folly of carnal pleasures.

This wretched situation under ground among companions not worthy to behold the light, trampled on by the meanest beggar, will free us from the vanity of seeking preference above others.

2d. It is the best instructor through life, laying down but one plain rule, to direct all our actions to our last end.

This consideration drives away all the busy troublesome insects this life is pestered with ; it keeps us steady in our course, and supports us on our journey.

3d. It teaches us to despise all this world can possibly afford, peoples deserts and cloisters, and is the retirement of all true servants of God.

4th. It teaches us to know ourselves, one of the chief points of true wisdom.

5th. It is like ice, and helps to chill and deaden the fire of concupiscence ; it is a bridle which curbs our sensual appetites.

6th. It is a continual source of humiliation, a specific remedy against pride and vanity.

7th. It is an excellent preservative against sin. In all thy works be mindful of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin. Eccl. vii.

8th. It brings exasperated minds back to peace and reconciliation : Whoever considers seriously that a certain and unavoidable death will one day place him before that Judge who shews no mercy but to those who pardon others, he will easily be induced to forgive.

9th. It is an antidote against the pleasures and vanities of the world: Thus the prince who placed the comedian in a crazy chair over a large fire, told him very justly, seeing his apprehension and uneasiness lest the seat should fail, that he ought to consider life to be like a decayed chair, which every hour, nay every moment, might fall to pieces; and the fire under him to represent Hell, into which every one ought to dread falling a victim.

10th. It teaches us a provident economy with regard to our salvation, by setting before our eyes that we are to dwell eternally elsewhere than in this transitory life, and consequently ought to lay up a treasure of good works while we have it in our power.

11th. It induces us to embrace with great cheerfulness a penitential spirit.

12th. It encourages us to persevere in it with great steadiness.



OF PENITENCE.

IT is the only way left us to return to God, when separated from him by sin.

There is a penitence of heart, and an active penitence; the one affective, the other effective; they must be united as the several circumstances of our condition require.

An active or effective penitence is to be put in practice when sickness and any involuntary affliction befalls us, or when through a penitential spirit we punish ourselves.

We practise it when in afflictions:

As often as we receive them with this intention, that being criminals in the sight of God, we look upon them as a punishment justly sent by a tender parent for our amendment; or a merciful judge, who inflicts a penalty in this life in order to spare us in the next. In a word, as often as we confess our sins with true repentance, and receive the punishment with due submission.

In order that these two interior acts may make the deeper impression on our

hearts, it will not be improper to accompany them with the following reflections.

That if the crimes for which we are punished were to be weighed against what we suffer, how light would the latter be in comparison with the former ?

That what we endure is by the especial appointment of God.

That his design in sending it is our advantage, in satisfying by it for our offences.

That it is in order to remind us of our wickedness ; since we seldom think on it before we feel the hand of God.

That if, by the sacrament of penance, we are already restored to a state of grace, this affliction is sent us as a means of satisfying the Divine justice for the temporal punishment due to our sins.

That the punishment due to mortal sin unrepented of, is eternal damnation, fire never to be extinguished, and an irrevocable banishment from God.

That millions have perished, who perhaps were guilty but of one mortal sin after baptism, and many of them surprised by death the moment it was committed.

In order to apply these truths to our own case when any affliction befalls us, we ought to retire into the closet of our hearts, and reason thus with ourselves:

Is it not an article of faith, that when I committed the first mortal sin after baptism, my portion from that moment ought to have been with those like myself, the reprobates in Hell? Alas! my God, how many years should I have already passed in that place of horror? If I reckon from the first mortal sin, what must I not have suffered in that fiery furnace to this time, and what might I not expect to suffer for all eternity? It is through thy mercy alone, O my God, that I was not there from the first moment I deserved it, that I am not there at this instant, that I may still hope never to come there, and that thou hast not dealt with me as thou hast with those miserable wretches who now burn there for all eternity.

Instead of those horrible and ever-enduring torments, from which thou hast graciously exempted me, thou art pleased to send this affliction, and yet I murmur, am impatient, and untractable.

What I suffer cannot last long; what I have deserved is eternal.

An active penitence is exercised by depriving ourselves of any satisfactions of body or mind, with an intention of making some atonement to the Divine justice; by bearing patiently any contempt or injury, and offering it to the Almighty in expiation of our crimes.

AFFECTIVE PENITENCE OF THE HEART.

THIS is acquired by grace, and our co-operation: The grace of God with me.

The means appointed by Providence for obtaining grace, is to ask it—Ask and you shall receive. Let us pray and labour to obtain it.

HOW WE ARE TO ASK IT.

BY forming repeated acts frequently every day.

By words, suitable to the affections God is pleased to give us, saying—My God, why did I ever offend thee; and why, since I have been so miserable, do I not conceive a sorrow for it, equal to that of the greatest penitents? Alas! to forfeit my baptismal grace, purchased with thy sacred blood! What ingrati-

tude on my side! What gracious mercy on thine to pardon such a wretch!

I now discern, O my God and Father, the excess of thy love, by thy incredible patience in my regard; thou didst spare to crush me into nothing, when I audaciously rebelled against thee.

The words of the devout penitents expressed in the Holy Scriptures will best suit the occasion. O God, be merciful to me a Sinner. Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee—I am not worthy to be called thy child. Against thee alone have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight. A contrite and humble heart thou wilt not despise—and the like.

HOW WE ARE TO LABOUR TO OBTAIN IT.

LET us consider attentively those motives, which are most likely to affect our hearts.

The infinite goodness of God, the evident marks of which we ourselves are.

The greatness of his Divine Majesty, which has no want of us.

The severity of his just vengeance, which might at once destroy us for ever.

Let such books be consulted as treat of these subjects.

Let us sigh and bewail in the presence of God for having offended him, if these reflections move our hearts ; but if they remain inflexible, let us sigh and bewail their insensibility.

Let us beg of the Divine goodness with the Samaritan woman—the water of life : Lord, give me this water ! One penitential tear can disarm the anger of Heaven.

When you ask your celestial Father to give you your daily bread, remember to pray for the bread of tears ; that ought to be the daily bread of sinners.

This grace ought to be implored by actions, as well as aspirations.

When you are moved to perform some good action, as an alms, fasting, some penitential work, or to deprive yourself of any diversion, offer it to God, beseeching him to bestow on you what of yourself you are unable to attain, a spirit of penance and sincere contrition for your offences.

Read over once a week, on a set day, these reflections ; for example, on Saturday or Sunday.

Make it a rule, if you desire to succeed, every day to set apart half an hour to be spent in reading some pious book,

under these two regulations ; the first is, to choose such books as will most efficaciously stir up a penitential spirit in your heart, the other to weigh with great attention such passages as seem to affect you in particular, and lead you to an interior and affective spirit of penance.

Assist every day at the sacrifice of the Mass, the principal objects of devotion for a penitent heart, since Jesus Christ is there offered for our sins, and to merit grace for our necessities ; join with the Priest in offering it to God for this end.

THE END.

APPROBATIONS

OF

THE FOREGOING WORK.



THE late Rev. ALBAN BUTLER, author of the *Lives of Saints*, says, that LAURENCE SCUPOLI, author of the *Spiritual Combat*, was a native of Otranto, and having gone through the course of his studies, lived with his parents till he was forty years of age, when he addressed himself to St. Andrew Avellino, by whom he was admitted to the religious habit, in the convent of St. Paul's, at Naples, in 1573. After some time spent in retirement and holy meditation, by order of his superiors, he displayed his extraordinary talents in preaching, and in the care of souls. This ministry he continued to the great profit and comfort of many, for a considerable time; but the trial of the just was yet wanting to perfect his sanctification. God, therefore, permitted him to fall into violent persecutions, through slanders and jealousies, by which he

was removed from serving the public. He bore all calumnies and injuries with silence, interior joy, and perfect tranquillity of mind, and shutting himself up in his cell, lived rather in Heaven than on earth, dead to the world and to himself, and entirely absorbed in the contemplation of Divine things. His love of poverty and humility appeared in the meanness of his habit, cell, and whatever he made use of; and, by the perfect crucifixion of his affections, he was so disentangled from earthly things as to seem scarce to live any longer in a mortal body. The fruit of this retirement was the incomparable book entitled *The SPIRITUAL COMBAT*, wherein he lays down the best remedies against all vices, and the most perfect maxims of an interior life, in a clear concise style; which, in the original Italian, breathes the most affecting, sincere simplicity, humility and piety. A spiritual life he shews to be founded in perfect self-denial, and the most sincere sentiments of humility and distrust in ourselves on one side, and on the other, in an entire confidence in God, and profound sense of his goodness, love and mercy. By reading this golden little

book, Francis of Sales conceived the most ardent desire of Christian perfection; carried it twenty years in his pocket, and read something in it every day, always with fresh profit, as he assures us. He strongly recommends it to others, in several of his letters. Scupoli concealed his name in this work, but it was prefixed to it by his superiors after his happy death, which happened in the convent of St. Paul, on the 28th of November, in the eightieth year of his age.

FONTENELLE also says—The Imitation of Christ, by Thomas a-Kempis, is the most excellent book that ever came from the hand of man—the Holy Scriptures being of Divine original, and the SPIRITUAL COMBAT may be called its key or introduction.

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